

'WILL HE MARRY HER?'

A NOVEL

BY

JOHN LANG,

AUTHOR OF

"TOO CLEAR BY HALF" "THAT FORGERS WILL,"
"THE WITNEIERS," ETC. ETC.

Yes, Leonora! It shall be our fate
To be entwined for ever—but too late!
BYRON'S Tasso's Lament.

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WILL HE MARRY HER?

CHAPTER I.

TREATS OF THE BIRTH, PARLAGE, AND FAMILY OF THE HERO.

ACCORDING to the Baronetage, which we now have before us, Sir Charles Reckless, Bart., of Reckless Castle, in the County of Kent, married, on the 2nd of March, 1814, Mary Louisa, second daughter of the first Earl of Twylytte, by whom he had issue as follows:—

First, Charles; second, John; third, Robert; fourth, AUGUSTUS; fifth, Mary; sixth, ELLY; seventh, Francis; eighth, Jane; ninth, Matilda; tenth, Isabella; eleventh, James; twelfth, Alice; thirteenth, Lucy; fourteenth, Alfred. Two sons and a daughter had been born between Robert and Augustus, but they died in infancy. The name of our hero is that which appears in large capitals, like the name of a "star" in a play-bill. The date of his birth was January the first, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty.

Sir Charles Reckless was an unpretending country gentleman, whose chief occupation was in cultivating a large portion of his extensive estate, which yielded him, in all, a clear five thousand per annum. Sir Charles, however, was neither a Squire Western nor a

Sir Peter Crawley, albeit he was devoted to agricultural pursuits; he had received an University education, and had taken an ordinary degree; while in point of bearing, manners, and address, he was, in the strictest sense of the term, "a perfect gentleman." Sir Charles was a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant of his county; but he rarely or never attended the meetings of the magistrates, or any other meetings. He evidently thought, with the Roman bard—

"Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis,
Ut pulsa gens mortalium,
Patena una bobus exerceat suis
Solutus omni tenore"

But, notwithstanding Sir Charles held aloof from taking any part in public affairs, he was a man of an extremely humane and charitable disposition, and, in a quiet and unostentatious manner, did a great deal of good, not only amongst his own tenantry, but amongst the entire people by whom he was surrounded.

Lady Mary Reckless was, in every sense of the phrase, one of the most charming women that ever existed. She had been,—and the outlines still remain, notwithstanding her age and her numerous offspring,—a person of transcendent beauty. She had a face that neither Lawrence nor Canova could have flattered; she had a form that poets would describe as "divine;" she had a temper so gentle and so patient, that those who knew her could easily realize the character of Griseldis. Not that Lady Mary was by any means "a tame being," for she had all that fire and enthusiasm which usually accompany the genius and the talents with which she was gifted. In matters of literature and art Lady Mary's taste was exquisite, albeit she never appeared before the world as an authoress or a patroness. Lady

MR. RECKLESS.

Mary, in fact, with all her beauty, grace, ability, and accomplishments, was a thoroughly domestic woman, and attended to the affairs of her numerous family as cheerfully and as diligently as the best housewife in the kingdom. After this description of Lady Mary, it is needless, perhaps, to add, that she was beloved by all who enjoyed her acquaintance.

Charles Reckless, the eldest son of Sir Charles and Lady Mary, was a steady, plodding youth, who was educated at Eton and at Oxford, subsequently called to the Bar, went circuit (the Home Circuit), now and then held a brief thereon, and half-a-dozen times in every year had an opportunity afforded him of addressing one or other of the Courts in Westminster Hall. He was not deficient in ability; but he lacked the capacity required for a great lawyer or a brilliant advocate.

Mr. Reckless inhabited a very comfortably-furnished set of chambers in King's Bench Walk, Inner Temple, of which society he was a member. His ambition to rise in his profession, and obtain a silk gown, was immense; and he studied as diligently as though his entire means of existence in after-life depended on this contingency. Mr. Reckless, moreover, liked the society of lawyers, and that studious life which he could uninterruptedly lead in his chambers. At home—if the truth must be told—he was bored by his little brothers and sisters, who were very nice and well-behaved children, no doubt, but who would not scruple to break in upon him when he was devouring the last number of Meesom and Welsby's, or Carlington and Payne's Reports, with as much avidity as you or I, reader, would devour the last number of a serial by Dickens, Thackeray, Ainsworth, or Brooks. Besides,

Mr. Reckless had a dislike to be called "Charley" by these little darlings. It was not that he was a pompous person—far from it; but he thought it inconsistent with the dignity of his position, as a member of the learned profession, whose name at intervals (irregular intervals, to be sure) was to be seen in the *Times*, and other papers, as ("with Mr. So-and-so") counsel for the plaintiff or the defendant, as the case might be. Mr. Reckless's establishment in chambers consisted of three persons—a clerk, a young man of about twenty, who had been born and bred in the vicinity of the Temple, and had never been a mile beyond its precincts in his life; he was a pale, thin, and rather tall lad, and wore a suit of dingy black clothes, and a cravat which would have been white had it not been for the "mildew spots" upon it. This clerk's name was Eliot. Who or what his father was, was one of those things not generally known. I never knew, and never inquired; but his mother used to wash and "do" for Mr. Joven, a bencher of "the other Society" (the Middle Temple), a very old gentleman, who was familiarly known amongst the students of the day as "Pam," or "the Jack of Clubs," in consequence of the extraordinary personal likeness that he bore to that eccentric card. The second person on Mr. Reckless's establishment who claims our notice was Mrs. Bly, the laundress, who "saw after" the chambers, cooked the chop or steak which Mr. Reckless ate for breakfast, to a nicety, and so arranged the faggots and coals in the grate, that when Mr. Reckless came home at half-past ten or eleven o'clock at night, he had not the slightest difficulty of lighting a fire, if he required one. She also "got up" the linen (about which Mr. Reckless was very particular) to perfection. Mrs. Bly's husband,

who was a ticket-porter, and wore the badge and apron of the order, cleaned the boots and shoes, brushed the clothes, assisted in getting in the coals, and ran (or rather leisurely walked) errands. This worthy couple, it was said, had their respective "griefs," which they endeavoured to drown to the extent of their ability, pecuniary and other. On the whole, his establishment gave Mr. Reckless great satisfaction, and he would not have exchanged it for any other in town.

John Reckless, the second son of Sir Charles and Lady Mary Reckless, after taking his degree—a double-first—at Caius College, Cambridge, studied medicine. John, who was also ambitious of obtaining professional distinction, took a house in Sackville-street, and enjoyed a small but select practice. He was considered very clever as a physician by those who consulted him. John Reckless, like his elder brother, was a very methodical gentleman; and, to use a common but expressive phrase, was "as regular as clockwork." The doctor's establishment consisted of a housekeeper (an old lady from the country, the widow of a half-pay lieutenant in the navy), a footman (who was attired in the livery of the Reckless family—red plush breeches and vest, and a drab coat with a green collar), and a valet, who wore plain clothes (black), and who was always to be found in the hall, whenever there was a knock at the door, with a slate and pencil in his hand, ready to take down with the utmost precision any message for his master. The young doctor had no cook; he did not require one. He invariably dined out; and Mrs. Blenkinsop, the housekeeper, would on no account have relinquished the privilege of preparing his breakfast with her own hands. The housemaid, the only female servant in the

establishment, was a young woman from the country and a *protégé* of Mrs. Blenkinsop.

Robert, the third son of Sir Charles and Lady Mary Reckless, distinguished himself as a scholar at Brasenose, Oxford, was ordained, and became the curate of a metropolitan rector, of great celebrity as a preacher and a man of letters. Robert was, at the time to which this period of the narrative relates, engaged upon a theological work, which—although the reception it met with from the public did not quite realize his sanguine expectations—was subsequently a source of profit both to himself and his publisher. The young divine had apartments in Harley-street, where he used frequently to entertain on a very liberal scale a number of clergymen of his own standing, whose means were not exactly as ample as his own.

Thus far, Sir Charles and Lady Mary Reckless were extremely happy in their sons. But (*surgit amari aliquid*) there came AUGUSTUS, who was now in his eighteenth year. From childhood, this youth had been as wild as a bird, as playful as a kitten, and as mischievous (harmlessly mischievous) as a monkey. There was not a single atom of vice or guile in his composition, but, nevertheless, he was constantly in some "scrape" or other. Handsome, manly, tall, frank, generous, open-handed, open-hearted, good-humoured, and ready-witted, he was an especial favourite with every one, notwithstanding his defects of character, which arose principally out of an exuberance or overflowing of animal spirits. Had it been possible for Sir Charles and Lady Mary to love one of their many children more than another, that child would have been Augustus. Even his steady elder brethren could not help loving him—much as he perplexed them at times

—while the younger ones of the family, of both sexes, adored “Dear Gussy,” as they were wont to call him and to speak of him. The tenantry swore by him; the gentry in the neighbourhood were always glad to see him; the ladies did their best to spoil him, by suffering him to say and do whatever he pleased in their respective homes. With the peasantry, his uniform kindness and civility had made him their idol.

There was no one in the county who was so good a shot as Augustus. Well-known gamekeepers would acknowledge this. With the hounds, his skill, daring, and judgment were the admiration of the whole field. With the rod and line, even Izaak Walton would have watched his cunning with a calm delight. He could sing either a sentimental or a comic song in such a way as to gain unbounded applause. He could play on the piano, the violin, and other instruments by ear, and without knowing a single note of music, any air that he had once heard. He could sketch—especially caricatures—with marvellous effect, although he had not the least idea of “drawing,” beyond what he had been taught by nature. In a word, Augustus Reckless was self-taught in all matters, even in spelling, which he insisted upon doing by ear, rather than by the recognised rules of orthography; and inasmuch as he had picked up his punctuation on the same principle, his composition, when reduced to writing, was far more quaint and unique than elegant and correct. His grammar, however, was unexceptionable, and he was never at a loss to express himself with clearness and force. As for compelling him to study, they might just as well have attempted to compel him to love ardently against his will. Augustus had been sent away from two private boarding-schools and from one public school, (Rugby)

for offences which, albeit they involved no species of moral turpitude or dishonour, could not possibly be tolerated in any well-regulated establishment for the nurture of juvenile intellect.

CHAPTER II.

TREATS OF OUR HERO'S PROGRESS IN LIFE.

AUGUSTUS RECKLESS had chosen the army as his profession, and it was now time that his commission should be applied for. Sir Charles, however, after consultation with Lady Mary on the subject, considered that it would be prudent to let the boy see something—say a few terms—of College life in the first instance; and inasmuch as Augustus had no sort of objection, Sir Charles wrote to one of the tutors of Trinity College, Cambridge, and caused the youth's name to be put upon the boards. Accordingly, on the 9th of October, 18—, Augustus took the coach to town—took it in more senses than one, for he drove all the way—and at four P.M. found himself in possession of the box-seat of the *Star*, which in those days was driven by the famous Mr. Joseph Walton. Inasmuch as Sir Charles knew perfectly what instructions to give, and to whom to give them, there were rooms well-furnished, well-fired, and in perfect readiness for the arrival of their future occupant, and a gyp in attendance to receive his orders. In short, when the coach was pulled up at the “Hoop,” Augustus had nothing to do but to descend from the box and request a porter to carry his luggage to “Letter Z, Old Court, first-floor.” Augustus was not

long in making an acquaintance. Immediately behind him on the coach was a gentleman with whom he entered into conversation. This gentleman was a Mr Dacre, a third-year man, a great scholar, but one who, nevertheless, was considered a "fast" character. "Fast," in those days, at Cambridge, did not signify what it signifies in these days; on the contrary, it signified a man who was not of a rowing or slangy character, but one who enjoyed himself to the full, in a somewhat refined style. Dacre kept his hunter, pulled in the boats, had his breakfast-parties, dinner-parties, wine-parties, supper-parties, whist-parties, musical-parties, and so forth; but he was far from being a boisterous man. He was, moreover, the leader of a set which numbered several very clever men (undergraduates) and College celebrities, who have since distinguished themselves in the world. One of these was possessed of great musical genius; a second had the most exquisite voice that was ever given to an Englishman; a third was famed, in his then small sphere, for those dramatic abilities (not only as an actor, but as an author) which have since been so well developed, to the delight of all playgoers in the United Kingdom; a fourth was a novelist, who, if he has not realized the hopes that were then entertained of him, has, at all events, been a successful writer to some extent; a fifth was a great speaker in the Union, and one who, if he has not risen to the highest of places, has frequently been listened to in "the House" with very great attention; a sixth was a great mathematician, and eventually a Senior Wrangler; a seventh was eminently clever with his pencil, and his paint-brush, and might have earned a very handsome income by taking portraits. In short, there was scarcely a man in Dacre's set who had not

done something to bring him into honourable notice at the University.

To Augustus Reckless, Frank Dacre took a very great liking, and this liking produced an interest in the youth's welfare. Had he been the son of a London tradesman, instead of the son of Sir Charles and Lady Mary Reckless, it would have made no difference with Dacre. He liked the boy for his honest, handsome face, which was plainly an index to the boy's heart; for his frank and unaffected manner, which lacked everything in the shape of pertness or conceit; and for his vivacious and cheerful discourse, devoid as it was of anything approaching conventional slang. It was not until after Dacre had determined that this young bird should belong to his set, that he discovered his name and his lineage. How he discovered it was this. One of the members for the County of Kent had recently died; and when the coach was near Royston, Mr. Walton, who always took a great interest in politics, turned round and said, "Have you any idea, Mr. Dacre, whom they will bring in for that seat?"

"Not the least," replied Dacre; "but I did hear the other day some mention made of Mr. Reckless."

"What Reckless is that? Who is he?" said Mr. Walton.

"The eldest son of Sir Charles Reckless," said Dacre.

"Oh! Sir Charles Reckless? I remember Sir Charles some years ago, when he was down here—good many years ago now. How times flies! Eldest son of Sir Charles Reckless?"

"Rather a clever man, they say. He is a lawyer."

"Oh! indeed? What are his politics?"

"Whig."

"Ah! all right. I hope he will come in. Eldest

son of Sir Charles Reckless? How time flies, to be sure! I remember him very well. Kept in lodgings in Green-street for a short time, when he first came up. Had one or two very nice cattle. Very good-hearted man, and steady-going, rather. Very rich, they used to say he was."

"I hope you will pardon me for intruding a remark upon your conversation," said Augustus, taking advantage of a pause; "but I think there is not the slightest chance of Mr. Reckless standing for the county, or for any other seat in Parliament that may become vacant. In the first place, Mr. Reckless has no money."

"But his father has," said Mr. Walton, "and that is the same thing."

"Oh, dear, no!" said Augustus, laughing. "And Sir Charles is nothing like so rich, I suspect, as he is supposed to be."

"What do you call rich, my good young sir?" inquired Mr. Walton. "Let us hear your notion of riches."

"Well, Sir Charles Reckless has barely five thousand a-year."

"That is pretty well, I think. Five thousand a-year? You would not say that he was a poor man, would you?"

"No; but certainly not a rich one."

"Well, sir, I hope your own expectations are such that you regard five thousand a-year as a sort of flea-bite."

"My expectations!" exclaimed Augustus, his face beaming with intelligence and humour. "My good sir, my expectations are the mildest imaginable! In point of fact, I have no expectations whatsoever! I am a younger son, sir; one of fourteen children, with

a prospect of being, before I die, one of two-and-twenty. After this disclosure, you will not think me a boaster when I inform you that *my* father has five thousand a-year; and that, although I do not say he is absolutely a poor man, still he is very far from being a rich one. Grown-up sons, sir, to whom you must make allowances ranging from three hundred pounds to two hundred pounds a-year; daughters, sir, who must have governesses; children, sir, who require countless nursery-maids to look after them. In addition to this, a large establishment to keep up, charities to subscribe to, hospitalities to dispense. Sometimes a bad harvest, and not half of your rents forthcoming! Five thousand a-year! What is it?"

"Well, there's some truth in that," said Mr. Walton; "but that is not Sir Charles Reckless's case."

"The deuce it is not?" said Augustus. "I have frequently heard him say that it was. Sir Charles is too honest a man to make any secret of his circumstances. He never pleads poverty or his large family when asked to give money for a good object, nor inflicts his affairs on those who don't care to hear of them; but he never scruples to impress upon those of his relations or friends who may forget it, that there is a reverse of the medal which bears upon its face 'five thousand pounds a-year.' It was only last night that I heard Sir Charles, at a meeting, say the substance of what I have repeated to you. It was not a public meeting—it was a family meeting, at which were present his amiable wife, my revered mother, and thirteen of my brothers and sisters—a regular diapason of Humanity, sir."

"Die a what?" said Mr. Walton.

"Well, to tell you the honest truth," responded

Augustus, "I do not know what it means; but my brother, the parson, made use of the word. I was a little too proud to ask him what it signified, especially as all the elder branches of the family, except myself, appeared to understand and appreciate it; and since then I have not had time to refer to a dictionary."

"I never heard the word before," said Mr. Walton.

"Nor did I," said Augustus.

"I do not think it's English," said Mr. Walton; "it sounds to me like Latin or Greek."

"It may be Dutch, for all I know to the contrary," said Augustus; "or Portuguese, or Spanish."

Here Dacre, who was vastly amused by the above colloquy, conveyed to both Mr. Walton and Augustus some information for which they both expressed to him their sincere thanks.

CHAPTER III.

TREATS OF OUR HERO'S INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIVERSITY.

"WILL you do me the pleasure of supping at my rooms to-night, Mr. Reckless?" said Dacre, when Augustus and himself had got down, and stood upon the pavement. "I have a party of friends coming to me at ten, and I shall be very happy to see you at my board, if you have no other engagement."

"You are very kind," said Augustus, in a tone which implied he had accepted the invite.

"I overheard you say you were going to Trinity. I belong to that College, and keep in Letter Z, Old Court, ground-floor," said Dacre.

"Then we are neighbours. I have the first floor on the same staircase," said Augustus.

"So much the better. Shall we walk together?" said Dacre, offering his arm, and giving directions to the porters touching the luggage—his own, as well as that of his young friend. And away they walked through All Saints' passage, crossed the street, entered the great gates, and were presently at the doorway of Letter Z.

"These are my rooms," said Dacre, leading Reckless (for in future we must so speak of him) into them.

The inner as well as the outer door of the room was open, and the gyp was there making every preparation for the forthcoming supper.

"Ah, Rorcher!" said Dacre, addressing himself to the gyp. "Well, I have returned, you see. How is everybody?"

"Quite well, I thank you, sir," replied Rorcher, bowing and smiling. "Very glad to see you again, sir."

"Thank you, Rorcher," returned Dacre. "Can you tell me who is Mr. Reckless's gyp?"

"Yes, sir; I am."

"Indeed? I am glad to hear it. Permit me to introduce you to that gentleman."

Rorcher bowed very profoundly, shutting his eyes, as was his wont, whilst he did so. Reckless acknowledged the salutation by raising his hat, bending his body, smiling sweetly, and showing his regular, white teeth.

"Very glad to welcome you to Trinity, sir," said Rorcher to Augustus. "You will find everything as comfortable as possible on the first-floor, sir. I am on the spot, as you see, sir; and Mrs. Croppitt is

now in the rooms waiting for your—advent,—advent, sir.”

Borcher was given to the use of words having a Latin derivation, and was in the habit of repeating them, in order to impress them upon his hearers.

“You are very good. But who may be my unknown friend, Mrs. Croppitt?” asked Reckless.

“Mrs. Croppitt, sir, is your bedmaker. Shall I see you to your rooms, sir?”

“No. I thank you. Pray go on with your present business. The rooms, I believe, are immediately above these; I shall have no difficulty in finding them. I will introduce myself to Mrs. Croppitt”—and with these words, Reckless looked softly into Dacre’s eyes. His look demanded a permission to retire; and this look was immediately understood, and its behest complied with.

“At ten!” said Dacre. “We meet at ten.

“Thank you; at ten,” repeated Reckless, leaving the apartment.

Mrs. Croppitt was seated in an easy-chair before the large fire in the sitting-room, when Reckless tapped gently, but audibly, on one of the panels of the inner door, which was closed. Starting up, she arranged her clean white cap, “smoothed down” her thin hair, and called out, “Come in!” Judging from the gentleness of the tapping, and the absence of any bustle, she had no idea that she was addressing herself to Mr. Reckless. Indeed, as she admitted very shortly afterwards, she was dozing, and fancied that it was somebody from the porter’s lodge to say that the gentleman had not arrived by the *Star*, and would not, therefore, be “up” that night. No sooner, however, did Mrs. Croppitt become acquainted with the fact of what Borcher

called Reckless's advent, than she at once received him with all that respectful tenderness for which she was so distinguished. She showed him his bed; called his attention to the cleanliness of the curtains; asked him to sit down near the fire, for she was sure he must be cold; and begged of him to drink a glass of the ale which Rorcher had ordered in from the butteries on his own responsibility.

"There's one thing, sir," said Mrs. Croppitt, "which I hope you will excuse me for asking you—because some say one thing and some another. Rorcher says you are not—while I have my reasons for maintaining you are. He says you are only a pensioner. I say you are a hat fellow-commoner."

"Upon my honour, Mrs. Croppitt," said Reckless, "I cannot say exactly what I am. I am not, however, aware of being a pensioner; and if I am, I really don't know who has pensioned me, or for what services I have been pensioned. As for being a Hat Fellow-Commoner, I have not the faintest idea what it means."

"Indeed, sir? Law!" cried Mrs. Croppitt, quite astounded that anybody should be ignorant on such a point, much less a gentleman on the books of the College. "Well, sir," she continued, after a pause, "your father, sir, was a Hat Fellow-Commoner when he was here."

"Was he, indeed? Well, I am not any the wiser yet."

Mrs. Croppitt then proceeded, in very lucid terms, to inform Reckless that a hat fellow-commoner was an undergraduate privileged to wear his hat instead of a cap, and that his gown was decorated with silver lace, instead of being a plain purple; and that these privileges pertained only to persons of title or their eldest

sons. A pensioner she briefly described as "the other business."

"Then I am the other business, if anything," said Reckless; "but I don't suppose it signifies much—does it?"

"Oh, dear, yes, sir," said Mrs. Croppitt. "If you had been a hat fellow-commoner, these caps and gowns would have been of no use, and Rorcher would have had to take 'em all back again." And with these words she withdrew from a closet some seven or eight gowns, and at least as many caps. "As it is, you may fit yourself with one or more of these. A spare cap and gown is always handy, sir."

"So I imagine," said Reckless, who now began to try first one cap and then another, until he found one that suited him exactly. "There, Mrs. Croppitt," said he, looking at himself in the glass over his mantelpiece; "that will do very nicely. Without any flattery on your part, what do you think of me?"

"Well, sir, without one atom of flattery, I think you a very handsome young man; and if I was a young girl, I should certainly fall in love with you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Croppitt. Thank you. You have paid me a compliment which, be assured, I appreciate."

"And now for the gown, sir."

"Give me the shortest, Mrs. Croppitt."

"Why the shortest, sir? You are a tall man—six feet, I should say."

"Quite that, Mrs. Croppitt. But then, you see, if I should ever have occasion to run from one end of the College to the other, when late for hall, chapel, or lectures—for I am told I must attend all these places—a short gown would offer so much less impediment to my movements than a long one."

"Well, so it would," conceded Mrs. Croppitt; "but then, it will look so odd."

"Never mind that," remarked Reckless. "Yes, this is the thing,"—and he slipped himself into a toga which scarcely reached his knees.

"You will get a nickname if you go out in that gown, sir," said Mrs. Croppitt, with a smile. "They will call you 'legs,' or something of that kind."

"I cannot help it, Mrs. Croppitt," returned Reckless; "but, tell me, to whom do these pictures and engravings on the walls belong? Not to me?"

"No, sir, unless you think proper to buy them, or any of them. They belong to Mr. Rorcher, sir. They form a part of his collection, which is made up of presents from his various gentlemen when they were going away, after taking their degrees. There are several nice things amongst them," said Mrs. Croppitt, holding up one of the candles so as to throw the light upon them.

"So I perceive, Mrs. Croppitt, and—and—bless me!—where did he get this?" pointing to an engraving of considerable size, representing a lady upon horseback.

"Ah! sir, that does not belong to him. There is a story about that picture. It was left here many years ago by a gentleman who kept in these rooms during his stay at College, and who, when he went away, expressed some wish, or other which has been carried out by all the gentlemen who have come in after him. Mr Swane, the upholsterer, has the frame regilded when it wants it, and I did hear it was to have been done during this last long vacation."

"But supposing any gentleman—myself, for instance—should wish to have it taken down, and another

picture put in its place? It would have to be done, I fancy?"

"I don't know about that, sir. But why should any one wish it to be removed? It is a very handsome picture, I think; and so does everybody. Don't *you* think so, sir?"

"Yes, I do, Mrs. Croppitt. But are you quite sure it has not been placed there by some one out of compliment and kindness to myself?"

"Bless you! no, sir! To my own knowledge it has been there for upwards of five-and-twenty years—long and long before you were born. Why should it be placed there out of compliment or kindness to you?"

"Simply, Mrs. Croppitt, because it is an engraving of a portrait of my own mother, taken two years previous to her marriage with my father. I would give anything for that picture. There are only three copies in the family."

"Law! only think! Well, I declare! How very strange! Your own mother, sir?"

"You said the ~~was~~ was a story about this picture. What is it?"

"Well, sir, I don't know; but I have an elder sister, who is now bedridden, poor thing, and I will ask her to tell me. *She* knows, because she attended on the gentleman who had it put there."

At this moment Rorcher entered the rooms; and after congratulating Reckless on the manner in which his ~~day~~ and gown became him, informed that gentleman that the guests were assembled, and that the supper would shortly be put upon the table. In consequence of this information, Reckless proceeded to make a hasty toilet, permitting Rorcher to brush his clothes, all standing, while he was in the act of so doing.

"My friends—Mr. Reckless!" said Dacre, with a wave of the hand, when the young freshman entered those well-known rooms on the ground-floor of Letter Z, Old Court.

"Very proud to make your acquaintance, gentlemen," said Reckless, bowing to the company.

"I concur with Mr. Rorcher in the hope that you found everything in your rooms to your entire satisfaction," said Dacre, good-humouredly.

"Oh, dear, yes!" was the reply. "Do you know, from the little that I have seen, I like this Cambridge, rather." This was spoken in a tone so regally patronizing, and so humorous, seeing that it was evidently assumed for the occasion, it afforded some merriment and subdued laughter. "I had an idea," continued Reckless, encouraged by the general silence to go on speaking, "that it was a cold, dull, and gloomy place, especially to a stranger; but, to my great joy, I find it the warmest, most hospitable, and cheerful locality in which I have ever had a lodgment. The ale, which I have already tasted, possesses excellent qualities; and" (here he held his hands near the fire) "the coals burn with a brilliancy and impart a warmth which is peculiarly agreeable after a long journey. I suppose you import them direct from Newcastle?"

"No; we get them from China," said Dacre.

"Ah! then the tea, I fancy, must have a very agreeable flavour, especially when taken in bed of a morning."

"We also get our cooks from China," said Dacre.

"Indeed! And what do they do with their long back-hair? Wear it down—twisted into a tail?"

"Oh, no; they form a pyramid with it, on the crown of their heads, and surmount it with a tall white night-cap."

"What a stupidity on their part! They ought to have it handy, and grease it, when occasion required, by stirring the soup with it."

When Reckless uttered these words, there was a genial relaxation of his features, and a comicality in his gesture, which endeared him to every one present. He was now one of them.

The supper was now quite ready, and the guests took their places. Some fourteen were assembled, including Daere and Reckless, who had a seat on the right hand of the host. It was, indeed, a supper-party—such an one as Horace has so well described, and would have enjoyed.

"O noctes cœnæque Deûm!"

There was an immensity of fun and laughter whilst the wine went round, but very little noise. And then came music and song,—not the last vulgar or obscene ditty fresh from the "Cider Cellars" or the "Coa Hole," but words worthy of the accompaniment which was played by the fingers of a master in the art. Hortney was singing, and Dearson was at the piano. Reckless was enchanted and astounded, as many others had been, to find such perfection in amateurs. After a while, Reckless was asked by Hortney if he could sing. He replied, "Yes; but I must accompany myself;" whereupon Dearson resigned his seat at the instrument, and Reckless did sing several out of his numerous collection, and elicited from his hearers much and well-deserved applause.

"You play remarkably well," said Dearson, "and with practice you would play even better than you do. You must come to my rooms, whenever you feel so disposed, and play with me."

"A thousand thanks," said Reckless; "but the fact is, I do not know one note from another on paper. I play entirely from ear, just as I sing."

"Impossible!" said Hortney.

"A fact, I assure you," said Reckless.

"Ah! but you should study," said Dearson.

"I could never study anything in my life!" exclaimed Reckless, touching the keys and astonishing his hearers with the brilliancy of his execution. "Never! The moment I am required to study anything, the charm is gone. Something like intuition has been my chief instructor in everything that I happen to know."

"It is to be hoped that you have an intuitive knowledge of discipline," remarked Dacre, quaintly; "for the Dons have become very severe lately at this College; and for our sakes, as well as your own, you must conform very strictly to the rules and the regulations."

"I will do my best," rejoined Reckless. "But I have very serious misgivings concerning the matter to which you have just alluded. I cannot tax myself with obstinacy, or a desire to run counter to other people's wishes; but through life I have always had an unfortunate propensity to be governed by my instinct, and this has entailed upon me a series of disasters."

"Do your instincts lead you to rise early?"

"Well, that depends a good deal on the character of the past night's rest."

"Because we attend chapel at a quarter to seven."

"I dare say I shall be able to manage that; but the fact is, I cannot promise anything concerning myself, so great is my fear of becoming a defaulter."

It was half-past one before the guests left Dacre's rooms, and Reckless was the last to go. He was invited to a wine-party for the following evening in the

rooms of one of the gentlemen to whom he had been introduced; and he accepted it "with much pleasure." The name of the gentleman was John Chayworth.

CHAPTER IV.

•RECKLESS MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF EDGAR WEST.

JOHN CHAYWORTH had been eight years at Cambridge as an undergraduate; he had been plucked four times, in four successive Januarys, and had made several ineffectual attempts to pass his examination in "bye" terms. Chayworth was by no means wanting in ability; on the contrary, he was a shrewd man, and had a large stock of common sense; but he had no taste for the classics or for mathematics, and no capacity to make himself master of six books of Homer, six of Virgil, and six of Euclid. The requisite amount of Paley he had got by heart, having written it out over and over again, day after day, and week after week, until it was quite impossible that he could ever forget it. He had read very hard with numbers of tutors, but to no purpose. Latin and Greek would not sit upon his mind.

Many persons were surprised that a man of Chayworth's means should be so anxious about a degree, since it caused him so much trouble and vexation; but those persons were not aware of the fact that John Chayworth was next heir to a family living worth 4000*l.* per annum, and that, unless he happened to be in the Church at the time of his uncle's death, the "living" would die with his uncle, so far as the family was concerned. Nay, more, Chayworth's future de-

pende^d entirely on the contingency of taking a degree at *Cambridge*—for his allowance of 500*l.* a-year was made to him by his uncle out of the proceeds of the living. Dacre and other friends had done all in their power to assist Chayworth, and had devised all manner of contrivances by which the Homer and the Virgil might be kept upon his memory; for Chayworth was one of the kindest, best-hearted, and best-natured of men, albeit he was irritable, passionate, and vehement at times over his books; so much so, that few private tutors coveted him as a pupil. Chayworth was now under the care—educational care—of a youth of nineteen, named Edgar West (a sizer on the foundation of Trinity), who had undertaken to make learning easy, and pass Chayworth in the forthcoming January. West used to attend his burly pupil, who was now in his twenty-sixth year, at all hours—late and early; he would frequently sit by Chayworth's bedside, and read aloud to him, explaining, translating, repeating, and exhibiting a patience which it was positively irritating to witness. Sometimes, when maddened by his inability to comprehend some difficult passage, Chayworth would snatch the book out of the boy's hand, and fling it into the fire-place. Utterly unmoved by this insulting demonstration, Edgar West would repossess himself of the volume,—then approaching Chayworth, with a winning smile, seize him by the wrist, bid him be calm; and listen. "That," he would say, in a gentle voice, "is the only atonement you can make me for such very rude behaviour." Whereupon Chayworth would hide his head beneath the bed-clothes, and cry, partly with rage and partly with remorse. It was rather an amusing scene to witness the man-pupil and the boy-tutor at their respective studies—the one

teaching, or rather trying to teach; the other, to learn. Chayworth was a tall, stout man, weighing some sixteen stone. West was a little being, not more than five feet high, rather thin and pale—very pale; with large dark eyes—very handsome eyes, but of a melancholy expression; a compact forehead, a well-shaped nose, and a prominent and delicately-formed chin. He was altogether a very singular-looking youth. His father and mother were both dead, and he had but one relation in the world—a sister, who was a year and a few months older than himself. She was then an assistant-governess in a fashionable boarding-school for young ladies. The father of these children had been an officer in the army, had served throughout the Peninsular war, and had been wounded in eight different engagements. Edgar was indebted for his education (at Westminster) to the General officer of that division of the army in which his father had served; and Miss West was the *protégée* of another General officer of distinction, who had placed her at the school in which she was now earning her own livelihood.

All Chayworth's friends were very kind to the poor sizer, and constantly invited him to their rooms. He was a very clever youth, and remarkably erudite for his years, but shy and timid. No doubt, poor boy, he felt the awkwardness of his position in the College. It was very true that the Great Lights of the University had been sizers; but that was a poor consolation to a youth of very sensitive feelings, who was hurt that he could not sit at the same table in the hall with his equals—many of them, in point of birth and breeding, his inferiors—and that he inhabited a garret, not by choice, or by reason of his small means, but simply because

that elevated position in the building was assigned to undergraduates of his class.

It was at John Chayworth's wine-party that Reckless met Edgar West for the first time; and although it would be difficult to conceive two characters so essentially different in most points, there sprang up between them a strong and mutual attachment. Reckless had no method whatever; West was methodical almost to primness. Reckless flew at his game, whatever it might be; West quietly entered into it. Reckless was fond of every species of sport; West had no taste for shooting, hunting, fishing, boating, &c. Reckless hated books; West loved them. Reckless smoked and drank—not to excess, but moderately; West had an abhorrence of tobacco and wine. Amongst the few tastes that they had in common were a love for music and song, and for female society. West's opportunities of enjoying the latter had been small when compared with those of Reckless. The only ladies whom he knew were those of the family of the General who had befriended him, and those of the family of the General who had befriended his sister; whereas Reckless could count up his lady friends by hundreds. Ere long, these youths—so different in their natures, tastes, and habits—were constantly in each other's society. You might see them walking, arm-in-arm, on "King's Parade," every afternoon, West's head not reaching Reckless's shoulder; and whenever you met them, they were in earnest conversation. And they constantly breakfasted together, Reckless every other morning ordering his bedmaker, or his gyp, to carry his "commons" over to "Mr. West's rooms" (if those dingy apartments in the Old Court deserved the name of "Rooms"),—for Reckless observed that West was

better pleased to be a host than a guest, and, therefore, was determined to visit him in his garret as well as be visited in his own rooms on the first-floor. And now and then Reckless would "look him up" at night, and have a little cold meat and a glass of ale with him, in preference to going to a large supper-party. It was on one of these nights that West unbosomed himself to Reckless—opened his whole heart, and made known his aspirations and his ambition. It was half-past twelve. The College was wonderfully quiet. Beyond the chiming of the clocks, there was not a sound to be heard. The youths had supped, and Reckless, having lighted his large Dutch pipe, had thrown himself into one of the two easy-chairs which had been sent into the garret by Chayworth for the mutual convenience of himself and his youthful tutor. West occupied the other easy-chair. Between them was a teapoy, upon which stood a brown jug, filled with College ale, and two tumblers. There was a good fire burning in the room, and it served more to light the apartment than did the two tallow candles, which required "snuffing" every five minutes.

"Do you not intend to read—read for your examination, Reckless?" asked West.

"No," said Reckless.

"Why not?"

"What's the use?"

"Use, my dear sir? Every use. Excuse me for saying so; but I do not think you are prepared; and, unless you read, you will never pass your 'little go.'"

"I don't care about a little go." .

"But, until you have passed your little go, you can't take your degree."

"I don't want a degree."

"Then why did you come up to Cambridge?"

“Because my father and mother wished it, and I had no objection; and I am deuced glad that I did come up, for I have met a very agreeable set of men, with whom I hope I shall be good friends for the whole course of my life—to say nothing of the pleasure of having made your acquaintance, West.”

“Thank you, Reckless. But do tell me—supposing that my curiosity be not impertinent, and you know how I love you, Reckless—what do you intend to do in the world? For I heard you say the other day, laughingly, but in earnest, evidently, that you were not a rich man, and never would be.”

“Well, look here, West. It would be a snobbish thing rather for me to say, amongst a number of gentlemen who have come up here to take their degrees, that I only wanted to make a temporary convenience of the University to which they belong, and therefore I have been silent on the subject; but, to tell you the honest truth, I am going into the army as soon as I am tired of my present life, or as soon as the authorities, who are beginning to bore me, by calling my attention to this and to that, take it into their heads to send me away.”

“Into the army!” said West, opening wide his large dark eyes.

“Yes.”

“Into the army?” (West sighed.)

“I believe that it is the only thing I am fit for, and I must do something.”

“Thing you are fit for! Is the army a thing, Reckless?”

“Well, what else is it?”

“Ah!” sighed West, rising from his chair, standing with his back to the fire, and drawing himself up to his

full (short) height—"Ah, Reckless! I would to Heaven that I could go into the army!"

"You, West? you are too little. Don't be angry with me for saying so; but really, West——"

"I am not angry, nor am I too little," said West, quietly. "Look at the General who has been so kind—aye, as a father to me. Was he too little? Too little to prevent us being thrashed by the French when they outnumbered us? Was General Hardinge too little to save our military credit at the battle of Albuera? Was Suwarrow too little to fight the battles of Russia? Was Pope too little to write the most vigorous poems in the English language? Was the head of Sir Isaac Newton—the smallest head that ever man wore—too small to hold the biggest brain of his age? Was Nelson too little to win the greatest battles of which the British Navy can boast? Is Runjeet Singh too little to hold in perfect subjection the biggest army, and of his own formation, that the East has ever seen? Do not, Reckless, I implore you, disparage any man's capabilities because he happens to be small."

"Say no more, West, or I shall die with laughter."

"Why do you laugh, Reckless?"

"Because at this moment you are so like a littlebantam cock I have at home, who is always ready to fight the whole farm-yard."

"I am not at all offended at your remark, Reckless. That little bird has, no doubt, great confidence in himself, and in a great measure illustrates my proposition. Do not imagine for one moment, Reckless, that I have any prejudice against tall or stout men; but all I mean to urge in support of the proportions of small men like myself, is this—that we are not to be despised or rejected in consequence of our insignificant dimensions."

"Well, my dear West, I don't wish to say anything against little men; but if you have so great an enthusiasm for the military profession, why did you not enter it, instead of coming up here?"

"Ah! my dear Reckless, it was not my fault. The General told me that he could not afford to buy me a commission, and that he could not ask the Horse Guards to give me one, because he had already obtained two for his own sons. I would enlist as a private, confident that I should soon become an officer, only that my size is against me. I am not up to what they call 'the standard.' Such nonsense! Just as if a little man could not march a long distance, and do a great deal of execution with a musket or a sharp sabre!"

"Which branch of the service would you like to belong to?"

"The cavalry! The dragoons!"

"You must really not be offended at my laughing, West; but I cannot help it. The idea of your being a dragoon! You would be like a tomtit on a round of beef, if you were on a charger. The horse would not know what to make of it."

"Then I would soon teach him, Reckless. My good sir, my father was not a bigger man than I am; and the General has told me that he was as gallant and dashing a soldier as even Henry Havelock, who was also a small man."

"Your father not bigger than you, West? Impossible!"

"I have the General's word for it, and, what is more, I have a suit of his uniform and his sword. It was not much that he left behind him, poor fellow!"

"Where is the uniform, West? I should like to see it."

"It is in the next room, in a box."

"Have you ever tried it on?"

"Yes."

"And doesn't it fit you like a purser's shirt on a handspike?"

"No; it fits me exactly."

"Get it out, West, and let us see."

"Come along,"—and West took up one of the tallow candles, and, followed by Reckless, entered his sleeping-room.

From beneath the bed, West drew forth a large leather trunk, which had evidently seen a good deal of campaigning. Having unlocked it and raised the lid, he exclaimed, "There! there they are!" Yes, there they were, certainly,—uniform, helmet, sword, sabretash, boots, spurs, and gauntlets.

"What's the meaning of this bit of red ribbon here, on the left breast of the jacket?" asked Reckless.

"He was a brevet-Major and a Companion of the Bath, though only a regimental Captain. Those were but barren honours, the General said; but, as a true soldier, he appreciated them, perhaps, the more highly because they were barren," sighed West.

"But I am certain these clothes are much too big for you, West," said Reckless, cunningly.

"I assure you they are not; they fit me exactly."

"Well, I cannot dispute your word; but still I can scarcely credit it."

"I will soon satisfy you on that head, if you will retire to the sitting-room for a few minutes."

"Oh, certainly;" and Reckless, leaving West to attire himself in the uniform and accoutrements of his late father, returned to the outer room, and sat down in the easy-chair. With a somewhat serious smile upon his face

he looked steadily at the fire. He wished to indulge in laughter; but the sight of those military trappings, which had been worn in battle-fields, and were now shut up in that old box, under that bed, in that dismal garret, forbade him doing so; and he waited the coming of his young friend in anything but a spirit of levity. No sooner, however, did West make his appearance in his martial habiliments—helmeted, booted, spurred, sworded, and gauntleted—than a sense of ridicule obtained a complete mastery over his melancholy mood, and, throwing himself back in the easy-chair, Reckless literally roared with laughter. Small as West's person seemed, and was, even in his cap and gown, it seemed even smaller in the military uniform. Instead of appearing before Reckless wearing a helmet and a sword, the Helmet and the Sword appeared to be wearing West's body; and under these pantomimic circumstances, laughter was excusable. West, heedless of the laughter, strutted round the room with a tread which, had he been a man of ordinary size, would have disturbed the worthy gentleman who kept in the rooms immediately below him; but, as it was, he could not have been subjected to the faintest inconvenience. This parade over, the little man, by stretching his arm to its extreme length, drew the blade from its steel scabbard, and having examined its edge, handed it to Reckless, who, having grasped it by the hilt and poised it for a few seconds, raised it aloft, and said energetically, "By Jove, West! I could do some execution with this weapon."

"I couldn't," said West, modestly. "In my hands it would only be useful as an emblem of authority; but as such an emblem it might be of more use than in the hands of a bigger officer. I do not mean to allude to you, Reckless. Personal prowess is not the most valu-

able gift for a cavalry officer. If he is a strong man and a good swordsman, so much the better; but to lead a regiment, or a squadron, or a troop, you want other qualities, which the General has told me my father had; and why, pray, should I not have them? General Beresford and Sir John Ely, the General has often told me, could, with their individual swords, have done more than any other officers in the army; but there were little fellows not half their size who could do much more with a regiment or a troop."

"Has Dacre, or Chayworth, or any other of our friends, ever seen you in this get-up, West?"

"No, not a soul except yourself. I have never mentioned my father's name or profession to any of them. All that they know of me is that, although I am a sizer, I must be the son of a gentleman. At least, I have the vanity to think so."

"Come and sup with me to-morrow night at ten, and wear the uniform. Come as you now are. You know that I do not wish to make a laughing-stock of you; but, to be candid, you look so comical and so peculiar as you now stand, that I would give anything if those with whom you have been so intimate could only see you as I do. As they are all gentlemen, you are aware that there is not the slightest fear of any tricks being played with the uniform, or the least risk of its being damaged in any way."

"I am not afraid of that," said West. "No one, except a senseless brute and thorough blackguard would fail to show some sort of respect for the dress and weapon of a dead officer—a dress worn and a weapon borne in many a hard-fought field of battle, with by far the bravest enemies that England ever encountered. No, Reckless; I am not afraid of that

and if you wish it, I *will* come. But I hope no strangers—that is to say, no gentlemen with whom I am not acquainted—will be invited.”

“Certainly not; the party shall consist of that set of men of whom Dacre is the recognised head.”

“Be it so.”

“But we must arrange this matter; we will have a little by-play. Let us meet after chapel in the morning; it is too late now to form our plans. Hark! It is two o’clock!”

CHAPTER V.

RECKLESS’S SUPPER-PARTY.

AMONGST the few pieces of advice that Sir Charles Reckless had given his son on the occasion of his joining the University, was this—“Do not be in a hurry to return any hospitalities that may be offered to you. Wait your time, and watch your opportunity, especially if you get into a good set, as I hope you will do. There is nothing more disagreeable, or more prejudicial, than to have it supposed that one keeps a debtor and creditor account, of wine, dinner, or supper parties.” And in deference to this sensible suggestion, Reckless had been nineteen days at Trinity before he ventured to say to any of those who had entertained him, “I wish you would make my rooms the trysting-place to-night at ten.”

It so happened that the great bulk of Dacre’s set were disengaged, or had engagements which they could waive without giving offence: so that Reckless was in

a position to give Rorcher and Mrs. Croppitt to understand that fourteen would sit down to supper. Rorcher was a gyp of such experience, that it was needless to give him any further instructions. He at once proceeded to the butteries, where he spoke confidentially to the younger Mr. Hudson, who promised that everything should be "done to a turn;" and Styles, the fishmonger, happening to be there, Rorcher buttonholed him, and talked of oysters, lobsters, &c.

"Rockless? Oh, it's that tall young freshman?" said Styles.

"Yes; but you must not send him freshman's stale oysters," said Rorcher. "He is in Mr. Dacre's set, and they are all coming to him to-night, to his rooms."

"I'll see to it myself," said Styles. "He's a fine-looking young man—rather. I have noticed him several times. I should not have thought he'd been so quiet as they tell me he is."

"Well, he is cubed, you see, by the older men with whom he keeps company; but I should not be surprised if some day or other he was to kick his legs over the traces and come out."

"Has he any money to speak of?"

"Well, I believe not, though he is a baronet's son. He told Mrs. Croppitt the other night that he was up here on an allowance of a guinea a day, and that he meant to live up only to twenty shillings of it." He is a very liberal young gentleman, but by no means extravagant."

These great preliminaries concluded, Rorcher made himself easy until half-past eight, at which hour he repaired to the rooms of Rockless, and, in conjunction with Mrs. Croppitt, became extremely busy. Inas-

much, as this was Reckless's first party, he was rather anxious that everything should go off particularly well, and asked his gyp and his bed-maker a variety of very unnecessary questions. At length, these personages, in as delicate a manner as possible, informed him that he need not be under the slightest apprehension that they would be deficient in their respective duties; and taking the hint, like a sensible young man, he vacated his rooms, and did not return to them until a quarter to ten, when he found everything (to use Rorcher's frequently used phrase) to his "entire satisfaction,"—with this little exception, that Mrs. Croppitt was in such high spirits, they might be faithfully described as hysterical.

"I know all about the story of the picture, sir," said she.

"Well, let us have it," said Reckless, in his off-handed way.

"Oh, dear, no," said Mrs. Croppitt, mysteriously; "I have promised my sister that you shall hear it from her own lips, provided you are not above going to see the poor soul."

"I will go and pay her a visit with the greatest pleasure in the world, Mrs. Croppitt. Where does she live?" asked Reckless.

"Not very far off, sir. I will show you, any day that you are so inclined; but it must be some evening, after dark. Lord-bless me!"—and Mrs. Croppitt sat down in one of the easy-chairs, and laughed frightfully; whereupon Rorcher shrugged his shoulders, and gave Reckless a look which conveyed to him that she had been *tasting* the wines, and perhaps something stronger.

The guests had arrived. The supper was upon the table, and they were on the point of sitting down, when

Reckless exclaimed, "How is this? We are thirteen. There is a vacant place. This will never do."

"Certainly not," said several, who were superstitious.

"Rorcher!" said Reckless.

"Sir?" replied the gyp.

"Run over to Mr. West, and ask him to come at once."

It had been arranged by West and Reckless that the former should not come until all was ready, when the gyp would bring him notice.

Rorcher, on beholding West in military uniform, and a sword by his side, was not only astonished, but rather alarmed at first. He thought it was an apparition, he said. Having requested Rorcher to follow, and not precede him, West tripped into the staircase in which Reckless kept, and was very soon in the room where the company was assembled, and waiting rather impatiently. Reckless affected to be startled on beholding the small dragoon. His guests were so in reality. No one at first recognised the little man; and even after he had removed the helmet, and sat down to the table, few could believe that it was West, so great an alteration did the dress make in his appearance. The supper over, and the cloth removed, West, at Reckless's solicitation, stood upon the table and underwent an inspection by all present, turning round for one or another when so requested. Until assured of the fact, no one credited that it was a *real* uniform—one that had actually been worn by a dragoon officer in the Peninsular War. They imagined that it was simply a fancy dress that West had purchased, or had had made to order, forgetting that it would have been rather an expensive freak on West's part; for although the gold-

lace stripes on the trowsers, and the epaulettes and other decorations, were somewhat tarnished, still, on the whole, the dress was in excellent preservation; while the sword, helmet, sabretash, and spurs, were almost as good as when they were first worn.

This examination of West and his appurtenances was scarcely over when there was heard in the court a noise of persons hurrying to and fro, and talking in a state of excitement. Rocher had gone home, and could not, therefore, be commanded to "see what all that row is about;" so Reckless went to the window himself, and called out, in a soft and civil tone to some one who was passing hastily, "Is there anything the matter?"

"Yes," was the reply. "There's a fire at the bottom of Silver-street. They say the whole of those large brewery premises will be burnt down."

"Let us go," cried out several of Reckless's guests.

"Come along!" shouted Reckless. "Come along! come along, West!"

"How can I come till I have changed my clothes?" he asked.

"Pooh! come as you are. Put a gown over your regimentals, and take one of my caps in lieu of your helmet. Here you are! Now, pray make haste, or we shall be too late to see it, and distinguish ourselves." By this time the whole of the guests were on their way to the scene, and were mingled with the crowd of undergraduates and townsmen hurrying to the spot.

"Do not be in a hurry, Reckless," said little West; "be calm, and cool, and collected. The shortest way to the bottom of that street in which is the brewery, will be the longest in point of distance. Let us go round by the backs of the colleges, where we shall meet

with no obstruction from the crowd, and we shall come upon the fire the moment we have crossed the bridge, and be in a position to render some assistance."

"You are right, West; but come along."

"I am coming, Reckless. But do not run on in that mad way; you will gain nothing by it. The chances are you will fall down, or get into a ditch, and thus by haste impede your own progress. There you go. I told you so. Take things quietly."

West's calculations were quite correct. It was no easy matter to force a passage through the dense crowd at the top of the street; whereas on the river side, at the bottom of the street, the road was as clear as possible. Long before Daere, Chayworth, and the rest could get into the line of buckets, West and Reckless had handed and passed on some forty or fifty, and they were now engaged, with several other gentlemen (masters of arts), in bringing up a long ladder, and placing it against the sill of a window, a considerable height from the ground; for, it was said, a servant-girl was in one of the rooms of the building. By this time West had lost the cap, which was too big for him; and feeling the gown an incumbrance, he had thrown it on the nearest heap (of gowns) belonging to the men of the various colleges.

No sooner was the ladder in its place, than the impetuous Reckless ran up it with the nimbleness of a squirrel, followed by West at a very steady but very sure pace. The room, or set of rooms, into which they penetrated, were the apartments of the lady whose husband owned the premises. There was no servant-maid nor any one else in them; but there were sundry matters in the shape of property, which the youths were bent on saving—A desk, a dressing-case, &c. &c.;

and they broke open a bureau, took out the letters, papers, and money in bank-notes that it contained, and thrusting the whole into a large clothes-bag, lowered it down, having tied the blankets and sheets together to make a rope long enough and strong enough for the purpose. Reckless was for crying out, "Stand from under!" and throwing them down by piecemeal; but West said, "No, Reckless! Be calm! We have yet time! The General says the best man under fire is the man who is most collected!"

"Hang the General!" cried Reckless. "It is all very well to talk about being *under* fire, but here are we *over* fire. Look at the flames coming up through the crevices in the boards!"

"Never mind, Reckless. It will take those flames more than two minutes to char these boards; and in a service of this kind, even seconds are worthy of being calculated to a nicety. There," added the little man, "the bag has touched the ground, and the property it contains is quite safe."

"But we are not!" said Reckless. "By Heaven, West, they have carried away the ladder! The brutes!"

"Never mind, Reckless. We have our rope; we will fasten it to this bed-post. No hurry! We have a minute yet. Go down; I will follow you."

"After you, my friend," said Reckless, gallantly.

"It is no time for compliments," said West, calmly; and down the rope he went, hand under hand, and was soon followed by his tall companion.

There were but few seconds to spare. Very shortly after Reckless descended, the room which they had just left was in flames, and fell in with an awful crash.

"I wish I could prevail on you, Reckless," said

West, when they were walking home by the same road they came, "to be calm in moments of extreme danger. If you had thrown those things out of the window, you would not only have damaged them or destroyed them, but you would have maimed or injured some of the people in the crowd. A man who flurries himself in such moments, and suffers his reason to run riot, is quite as dangerous to his friends as to his enemies. At least so the General has often said, and I believe him."

* * * * *

On the following morning there appeared a paragraph in the *Cambridge Chronicle*, to the effect that "*An undergraduate of Trinity, and a dragoon officer who was on a visit to him, had rendered themselves honourably conspicuous at the fire, and had saved family documents and family trinkets which no amount of insurance could possibly have covered, had they been devoured by the all-consuming element.*"

CHAPTER VI.

TREATS CHIEFLY OF JOHN CHAYWORTH AND EDGAR WEST.

PAINFUL as was the task of cramming Chayworth with the classics, West persevered with as much good-humour as though it had been actually a labour of love. It was, indeed (if so commonplace a simile may be employed), like writing on the sands of the sea-shore. What Chayworth was taught one day, he would forget on the day following. Even Reckless, who was a very poor hand at Latin or Greek, could not help picking

up a few crumbs of knowledge whenever he happened to be present at one of Chayworth's lessons, so systematically did West hammer away at every sentence, and every word that presented the least difficulty. At times, when Chayworth found his wrath (engendered by the consciousness of his incapacity) rising, he would endeavour to get rid of his youthful tutor until the fit was over; but to no purpose. West clung to him with as much tenacity as did the old man of the sea cling to Sinbad the Sailor. If Chayworth, in a fit of disgust and impetuosity, would declare that he was feverish, and wanted the fresh air, West would remark, "It will do you all the good in the world; I will accompany you; and, as I know this passage by heart, we can talk about it, and so not lose any time." When, upon other occasions, the burly Chayworth would, in a fit of utter despair, cry out—"It is of no use! I will abandon the attempt and the hope!"—the diminutive West would remind him that there was a solemn compact between them; and he would pound away at his charge in a manner which reminded a spectator of a small steamboat tugging a large sailing-vessel to sea against the wind and the tide. Even when Chayworth drove out in his gig, which he kept at the University, West would sit by his side, and, while they were bowling along the road, keep on reiterating those little matters which it was absolutely necessary that Chayworth should remember.

"I feel," West used sometimes to remark to Reckless, "that my health is breaking down under this frightful fatigue of body and of mind; but I am determined to carry my point, and take him through in triumph—if so dignified a word may be used in

reference to obtaining a wretched Poll degree for him."

"What degree do you expect to take yourself, West?" Reckless asked one day.

"I do not know," was the modest reply; "but Dacre and several other scholars of the College tell me that I shall stand high in the Tripos."

"And yet, like a fool, West, you would go into the army?"

"Do not say 'like a fool,' Reckless, because I think the army is my vocation; and—as I have already told you—if I were big enough for the ranks, and had not a sister who may be dependent on me some day or other, I would certainly enlist."

"I wish you would come down with me to Reckless Castle at Christmas, which is now near at hand. My people would be delighted to see you. What do you say?"

"A thousand thanks, dear Reckless; but until Chayworth has taken his degree, I cannot suffer him to be out of my sight for more than a few hours together."

"And have you really any hope of getting him through?"

"The strongest hope; and I watch him as a physician watches the case of a patient who is wavering between life and death. By the way, Reckless, will you do me a very great favour?"

"Yes; I'll do anything in the world for you."

"Be a party to a pardonable deceit?"

"Yes; and, if you were to insist upon it, an unpardonable one either."

"Oh, no! It is simply this: I wish you to remark to Chayworth—just before the term ends, and you go

away for Christmas—how ill he is looking. Dacre will do the same, and so will several other of our mutual friends, I am sure, when I tell them of my object. Sudbury, the doctor, has promised me faithfully that he will assist me."

"I'll persuade him that he is dying, if you like, West. But *what* can be your object?"

"Merely to confine him to his rooms, and prevent him from taking any part in the festivities of the season. He is very timid and nervous about his health (which is as robust as that of man can possibly be); and if I can only have three weeks of continued and uninterrupted quiet with him, I am positive I shall be able to launch the heavy barque on the waters."

"You may depend upon me, West, that I will do all in my power to aid you in this praiseworthy undertaking. But, tell me, what remuneration are you to receive for all this vexation, trouble, and patience?"

"Remuneration? None! beyond the pleasure I shall experience in having repaid to some extent an act of trivial but disinterested kindness, and the secret satisfaction which will arise out of the reflection that I have been able to achieve for him what others could not."

"An act of kindness, West? What act of kindness?"

"I would rather not have referred to it; but since you have asked me the question, I will tell you. One morning I was coming out of chapel, and accidentally ran against a fellow of this Collège—a great tuft-hunter, who only reads, he says, with noble pupils. I apologized for my unintentional rudeness; but instead of receiving my apology in a proper spirit, he took advantage of my humble position, and insulted me most grossly. He called me 'clown,' 'boor,' 'bear,' 'beast.' Chayworth,

who was immediately behind us, and witnessed the scene, put his hand upon the tuft-hunter's shoulder, and said, 'Low-horn—low-bred—son of a menial servant; you, whose father blacked my uncle's boots! how dare you thus insult an unoffending boy? Hound! I would beat to a mummy your plebeian features, if it were not that I should disgrace my fists by staining them with your base and filthy blood!'"

"And was there a row?" asked Reckless, energetically, and hoping that there had been "a fight."

"No," replied West; "the Tuft-Hunter apologized to Chayworth—expressed his regret and so forth—whereupon Chayworth, in his anger, applied to him several very offensive and rather coarse epithets, and left him. Such was the origin of my acquaintance with Chayworth, who, from that day to this, has always shown me great kindness. The offer to teach him was mine."

"And now you are going to persuade him that he is ill?"

"No. The doctor and his friends must do that. My rôle will be to insist upon it that he is well—at all events, well enough to read."

Fortunately for West, and for Chayworth perhaps, the latter sprained his ankle on the day which followed the conversation just related; and he was confined to his room and his couch for thirteen days. Once upon his back, the doctor, who appreciated West's motives, kept him there. He forbade his going out, assuring him, if he did, that he, the doctor, would not be answerable for the consequences. Thus was Chayworth prevented going to his stable, to look at his horse and talk to the groom; thus prevented from visiting the Greyhound Hotel, to play billiards; thus kept from

excursions on the river; and, what was of equal importance, West prevailed upon the few of Chayworth's friends who remained "up" for the vacation to visit him as seldom as possible, and on no occasion to remain for any length of time with him.

Meanwhile nearly all the members of the set went to their respective homes, and Reckless to his, at Reckless Castle. But before he left the University, he paid a visit to Mrs. Croppitt's sister.

* * * * *

In a little narrow street, not far from Emanuel College, and leading into New Square, there was a small house occupied by Mrs. Coleby, the bed-ridden bedmaker, and her niece, a girl of sixteen or seventeen years of age—a very plain girl, who occasionally "helped" her other aunt, Mrs. Croppitt, in "doing" the gentlemen's rooms. Mrs. Coleby owned this house, and another adjoining it, which she used to let furnished. It was said that Mrs. Coleby had a great deal of money for a woman in her station of life, and that she had come by it honestly, though no one knew exactly in what way. The lower room of the abode—to which Reckless was led by Mrs. Croppitt, who left him at the door—was exceedingly well stocked with rather expensive furniture, and there was scarcely a piece of the walls to be seen, so covered were they with pictures and prints. The niece having announced Mr. Reckless, he was shown into the room up-stairs.

It was not from age, but in consequence of an accident, that Mrs. Coleby was unable to walk, or even to stand,—for her years did not exceed sixty. This bedroom, to which she was confined, was rather elegantly furnished; but there were no pictures on the walls,

with the exception of some portraits of gentlemen in academical costume—gentlemen whom Mrs. Coleby had attended during their sojourn at Cambridge, and of whom she had requested a likeness. And near to each picture was hung upon a peg, or a large nail, a hat and gown, or cap and gown, which had been worn by her favourites. In one corner of the room was a large bookcase, with glass-doors, filled with all sorts of miscellaneous property—decanter, corkscrews, plate, cruet-stands, &c. &c.; gifts—all gifts, with which Mrs. Coleby would not have parted for five times their intrinsic value, for she used to say they were as companions to her in her helpless condition.

“And so you are the son of Sir Charles Reckless, they tell me,” said Mrs. Coleby, raising herself in bed, and looking at her visitor searchingly.

“Yes,” said Reckless, “I am a son of Sir Charles.”

“You are not like him in face.”

“No; I believe not.”

“You are more like your mother.”

“So I am told. Did you ever see my mother?”

“Oh, dear, yes, several times. That is her picture that is hanging up in the old rooms.”

“Yes, and I am told that there is a story connected with it—a story which I am rather curious to hear. Did my father occupy those rooms when he was at the University?”

“No, he did not. When your father, who wore that hat and gown which you may see on yonder peg—when he was an undergraduate, kept in Neville’s Court, those rooms in which you are, were occupied by your uncle, the late Lord Twylytte, who brought that picture with him when he first came up. It was with that picture that your father first fell in love, and he

little dreamt then that he would marry the original. When he first saw that picture, he had not seen your mother; and if he had not seen it, he would not, perhaps, have ever known her."

"Who owns the picture now?"

"No one. It belongs to the rooms."

"Who gave it to the rooms?"

"Lord Twylytte."

"Why didn't he take it away with him?"

"Because I begged him not to do so. Many gentlemen have wanted it, and one did carry it off; but I soon got it back again. A lawyer's letter was sent after him."

"Who was he?"

"That is of no consequence. Like your father, he fell in love with it, and used to stand before it for hours together. It was a very unhandsome thing to take it from the walls. I missed it, of course, the moment it was gone, and instantly complained to the authorities."

"Do you not think that *I* could remove it?"

"Most certainly not."

"Have you any idea where I could get a copy?"

"Well, there were only fifty printed; and the plate, I believe, was then destroyed or spoilt, and a good many of the copies were lost. The publisher's premises were burnt down. Many gentlemen who have kept in those rooms have tried to get copies, but could not. There is another copy in the town."

"Where?"

"Not far from here; but you cannot have that, because it was given by your mother to the humble person who owns it, and who would not on any account part with it, so long as she lives. Oh, yes; I have seen your mother several times since her marriage. She

came here with Sir Charles, and they went over the old rooms—his, and Lord Twylytte's. Give my respectful duty, please, to Sir Charles and Lady Mary when you next see them."

"I will not fail to do so."

"May I offer you a glass of ale?"

"Thank you."

"Mary!" cried Mrs. Coleby, "take these keys; open the cupboard, take out a silver tankard, and draw a glass of ale for this gentleman."

Mary, in obedience to these commands, soon placed the well-filled tankard in the hands of Reckless.

"That tankard belonged to a gentleman who was a great friend of your father's," said Mrs. Coleby. "He gave it to his gyp, who drank himself to death a few years ago, and I bought it at his sale amongst other things that had been given to him—such as Lord Clifton's claret-jugs, and Mr. Ashley Broke's salt-cellar."

"But of what use are these things to you, Mrs. Coleby?"

"Of great use. They recall the past. I have them brought to me, and while I look at them, I live over again those happy days when I was younger and able to move about, and work from daylight till dark, and half the night through. I have had some curious characters, good and bad, amongst the gentlemen who have passed through my hands. Of what use, you may ask, is that hat and gown on yonder peg? All the use in the world! Of what use is that surplice, hanging on that bed-post? All the use in the world! Of what use is that cracked decanter, which will not hold wine, or anything else in the shape of liquid?"

"None whatever, I should say."

"Oh, yes, it is. It recalls the whole scene, on the night when it was broken, in the rooms of the gentleman it once belonged to. When I look at it, the whole party are before me; and a very merry one it was, I can tell you. I often wish I was scholar enough to write a book called *The Recollections of a Bedmaker*. Fast men, slow men, reading men, rowing men, rich men, poor men, good men, bad men, well-born men, low-born men, high-bred men, low-bred men, honest men, dishonest men;—every sort of men have I attended within those old walls of Trinity College. I had the credit of doing justice by my gentlemen, and many of them now come to see me when they are passing through Cambridge, or when they take it into their heads to pay a visit to the University. Bless me! when the last election for High Steward took place, I had quite a regular *levée* in this room. I had a duke, two marquises, and three earls, several viscounts, and a whole troop of baronets, besides commoners—all Masters of Arts—who came to see me when they ran down to vote. * And I remembered every one of them, and their peculiarities, the moment I saw them. One was a cabinet minister, and I made him and all the rest of them laugh heartily by reminding him of something."

"What was it, Mrs. Coleby?"

"Well, sir, he was given to sleeping out of College: but he used to tumble his room about in such a way, as *he* thought, as to deceive me; but he didn't; for on looking at his rumpled night-dress, I discovered that his arms had never been through the sleeves. But as he never got into any trouble, I never reported him. I am very glad to hear from my sister, sir, such good accounts of yourself. • But—excuse me for saying so—you have rather a wildish eye."

"Thank you, Mrs. Coleby."

Here the conversation was interrupted by a loud knock at the door, and Reckless rose from his chair with the intention of taking his departure.

"Don't go," said Mrs. Coleby; "it is only a poor gentleman who comes here now and then to see me. Don't take any notice of him, and he will take none of you. He is half-witted, or, to tell you the truth, he has now no wits at all."

Up the stairs walked, or rather tottered, a rather tall man, in a dingy, threadbare suit of clothes. He looked an old man. He had short, grey hair, and a purple face. But shabby as was his attire, and vacant as was his stare, his manners betrayed that he had seen more prosperous days. Approaching the bedside, he took Mrs. Coleby's hand, and shaking it warmly, said, "Did I not leave some change on the mantelpiece?"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Coleby, "and I have it in my purse. Here it is, sir—three shillings and sixpence; and putting her hand under the pillow, she withdrew her purse, and counted out the sum she had mentioned.

"Thank you," said the stranger—for stranger he was to Reckless—"I thought I left it there. One rarely loses anything, I find." And with these words, he again shook Mrs. Coleby by the hand, and took his departure.

"That was a very rich man once," said Mrs. Coleby to Reckless. "Many a thousand pound of his was spent in this town, when he was an undergraduate. He is nothing like so old as he looks. He is not more than forty-three or forty-four, though he might be guessed at seventy. When I first knew him,

he had nine or ten thousand a-year, and he now lives on the charity of those who were formerly his servants. He gambled and dissipated his fortune away. At one time he kept twenty horses here, and gave the largest parties of any man of his time. With his money went his wits and his health."

"He could never have had many wits," said Reckless.

"Yes, he had, sir," said Mrs. Coleby. "He was a very clever young man, in everything except taking care of his property, and of his health; and a very gentlemanlike young man, too, when he was in his sober senses. It was only when he found himself ruined that he became an imbecile. He was for several years in a lunatic asylum, until we, who knew him in his palmy days, took him out, and agreed to support him between us. He is very harmless, and never molests anybody."

"I suppose he drinks still?"

"No, sir, never, unless it is offered to him. Where he is known amongst the tradespeople, they give him a glass of good wine, when they think it will do him good. He fancies that he is still very rich, and gives magnificent orders, which of course are not executed. His belief is that I am still his bedmaker, that Mr. Rocher is his gyp, Habbiss, the livery stable-keeper, his groom, and so on."

"What is his name?"

"To the present generation he is Mr. Brown; but what his real name is does not signify."

"Has he no relations?"

"Yes, he has relations; but they do not recognise him now. Some of them are very lofty people, I assure you. It was they who put him into the asylum, where

he was pining himself to death, until we took him out. When he was rich, he was always very kind and generous to poor people; and the same feeling lives in him still. From here he will go to Habbiss's, and give away that three shillings and sixpence; but as all the pieces are marked and well known, they will be brought back to me before to-morrow."

"But suppose he should give them to a stranger?"

"There is no chance of that. He never speaks to, or goes near, any one but those whom he knew formerly, and who humour him, and make him believe that he has still ten thousand a-year."

"But where does he live? and where does he sleep?"

"Well, sir, he is never in want of a dinner, or a breakfast, or a bed. Sometimes we miss him for a few days, but he always comes back safe and sound. He gets away to Chesterton, or to Melton, or to Stapleton (at all of which places he is well known), and fancies that he has been to one of his estates. It was at Stapleton that he lived when he was rusticated for a term; and during the nine weeks that he was there, he spent a tremendous sum of money. He had his stud removed there, and the inn at which he lodged was always full of people—gentlemen and others. But, sir, I am afraid I am tiring you," added Miss Coleby. "I am very glad, indeed, to have seen a son of Sir Charles and Lady Mary Reckless, and you have promised that you will give my respectful duty to them; and if, when you return to Cambridge, after the vacation is over, you will do me the favour to call upon me again, I should esteem it as a great act of kindness."

Reckless reassured her that he would comply with her

wishes, and then took leave of the old woman. He was somewhat disappointed with the story of the picture (as may be the reader), for he was prepared for something romantic; but the sight of that wreck of a man of fortune made a great impression upon him; and, on the whole, he felt rather glad that he had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Coleby.

CHAPTER VII.

INTRODUCES THE READER TO OTHER PERSONAGES

SOME three miles from Reckless Castle there was an estate called "the Downs," upon which stood a magnificent abode. It belonged to a Mr. Rothewell, who was obliged to live abroad—in Italy—for his health's sake, some said; while others gave out that he had even stronger reasons for so doing. The abode—the house, not the estate—was, at the period to which this narrative now relates, rented by a Colonel Ornsbie, of the Bengal Horse Artillery, who was "home on furlough." Colonel Ornsbie had no wife with him. It was understood, that she had died in India, leaving him two children—a son and a daughter. The former was not in England, or, at all events, he was not living at "the Downs;" but the latter was, and kept house for her father, the Colonel.

Miss Ornsbie was in her seventeenth year; and when Reckless first beheld her, during the vacation he was spending at home, he thought her the most beautiful creature that ever trod the earth. Nor was Reckless singular in this opinion. The whole country—that is

to say, the society in which Miss Ornsbie moved—raved about her. She had such glorious eyes!—so large, so soft, yet so full of fire! Byron's description of those handsome eyes of which he was so fond, seemed poor and weak to those who looked into Miss Ornsbie's. And such hair!—so jetty black, silky, and shining! As for her features, they were, if possible, *too* delicately formed; and her teeth were so small, pearly, and regular, that it seemed a sin that she should use them for ordinary purposes—so palpable was it that Nature had intended them as an ornament. Her skin was as white as marble, and of the very finest texture imaginable. She was rather tall for her age; and her figure was superb. Her hands and feet were exquisitely shaped; and let us not forget to make allusion to the shape of her head and her ears. These were truly Grecian, and perhaps the chief of her very many personal charms. Sir Charles Reckless used to say that he could look at her for a year without being tired of gazing, and Lady Mary used to say the same. Nature, moreover, had given to Miss Ornsbie a very sweet and musical voice—not for singing (she possessed but few accomplishments, and had a very indifferent education, having been brought up in India), but for conversation; and she had almost a foreign (French) accent, which was rather pleasing than otherwise, and at times there was a quaintness even in her idiom—indeed, it was scarcely an English idiom. In point of mental ability, Miss Ornsbie was abundantly supplied; and, though she was extremely artless in her manners, which were very quiet and unassuming, she was, in reality, a very shrewd being. With this girl Augustus Reckless became enamoured; and to his great joy, shortly after he made her acquaintance, he dis-

covered that his attentions were pleasing to her, and that she preferred his society to that of several others, who, in a worldly sense, were far more eligible as lovers.

There is certainly a great pleasure in imparting information to those who care for listening to us; and Reckless loved Miss Ornsbie "all the better" because she was not learned or highly accomplished, and did not affect to be so. Reckless, notwithstanding the great amount of his miscellaneous and strangely-acquired information, was not a particularly good instructor; but still, with Miss Ornsbie's desire to learn, he contrived, in his conversations with her, to teach as well as to amuse. And while thus delightfully employed, Reckless himself was being instructed; for Miss Ornsbie would talk to him of the manners, customs, habits, language, and religion of the people of India—the land of her birth, and the land in which she had spent nearly the whole of her life.

It was bruited abroad in the County of Kent, and with some truth, that Colonel Ornsbie was very rich—that he had five lacs in Company's paper, so many hundred shares in the Oriental Bank, the Agra Bank, the North-Western Bank, the Delli Bank, the Cawnpore Bank, and the Benares Bank—to say nothing of his bungalows in every important station of Upper India. But it was not the reputed wealth of the Colonel that attracted Augustus Reckless so often to the Downs. He loved the girl for herself, and herself alone; and perhaps his love was sharpened by her comparative ignorance of the conventionalities of English society, and of those matters which all young ladies educated in this country or on the Continent are intimately acquainted with. It charmed rather than dis-

gusted him, to hear her ask how many persons "subscribed" to the *Times*, and then to listen to the reason which she gave for asking the question, pointing out, as she did, the system which prevailed in India with regard to newspapers. Nor did her infinitesimal knowledge of eminent modern literary celebrities give him any offence—because it gave him an opportunity of telling her all he knew about them and their writings, and hearing from those beautiful ruby-coloured lips of hers some account of the clever things written by Mr. Henry Torrens, of the Bengal Civil Service; by Mr. Henry Meredith Parker, by Captain Macnaughten, and others—gentlemen of very great and very deserved repute in India, but of whom Reckless had never previously heard.

Colonel Ornsbie, though a colonel in the Bengal Horse Artillery, in times of peace cared nothing for military affairs. He drew, in India, his 140*l.* a month in the shape of pay and allowances, but it was very little that he did for it. Like too many other officers of rank in the Artillery, Cavalry, and Infantry, he had for years past given his mind entirely to speculations. And he was now in England solely for the purpose of founding a Sugar Company, a Steam Navigation Company, a Coal Company, a Tramway Company, and several other Companies, besides an East India Agency. He was a gentleman by birth, and in outward manners and address, but he was, by fits and starts, a vulgar-minded man; and he could be mean, mercenary, illiberal, and at times treated his daughter more like one of his menial servants than a child. For this last-mentioned defect in his character, Reckless hated him from the very bottom of his heart.

One day, when Colonel Ornsbie had gone to London

to "set on foot" the various Companies which he was projecting, Augustus Reckless strolled over to the Downs, and beheld Miss Ornsbie on the lawn. She was alone, and had upon her left arm a basket, and in her right hand a pair of scissors, to clip the winter flowers for a bouquet. She was habited in a black silk dress, over which was thrown a blue cloth cloak. She wore upon her head a black silk capuchin, trimmed with rose-coloured ribbon. She looked lovely, and, when Reckless took her hand, he could not help telling her so. Something like a blush came to her cheeks, and she was for a brief while a little confused; but, rapidly recovering herself, she invited her youthful admirer to enter the house, and partake of "tiffin" (such was the word she used), which was about to be placed on the table. Reckless offered her his arm, and they proceeded to the dining-room.

The repast ended, the servants retired. Reckless was alone with Miss Ornsbie, in the apartment to which she had conducted him. He took advantage of the situation, and made an avowal of his affection for her. His speech, like that of most young men upon such an occasion, was a silly one, no doubt; but it had the merit of being frank, honest, and ardent. "We are too young—at least *I* am," concluded Reckless, "to talk of being married just now; but all I ask of you is to accept my offer, and be mine as soon as circumstances may admit. • Speak, Leonora!"

She did not withdraw her hand from his; but she kept her eyes fixed upon the ground for a few moments, and then raising them, she looked into his face, and said, in a melancholy tone of voice, which evinced she had been deliberating, "Ah, no! It cannot be!"

"Another holds your heart?" said Reckless, tenderly and tremblingly.

"No," was her reply.

"You do not love?"

"Yes, I do love; I love *you*, as ardently and as fondly as you love me; for I believe all that you have said to me."

"You love me, Leonora, and yet you will not pledge yourself to be my wife at some future day?"

"It cannot be!"

"Is it that I am a younger son, and that my worldly prospects are not so brilliant?"

"Do I seem a being who would weigh the worldly prospects of a man whom she could love? Do you think me capable of bartering my affections for wealth, rank, or position in life?"

"No, Leonora! Forgive me!—do forgive me! But tell me why will you not promise to be mine?"

"I cannot tell you; or rather, I will not tell you."

"You fear your father——" (he paused).

"I fear no being in the world, but one—namely, my God! But there is a fear, a bitter fear, now lurking in my heart, which is——"

"What, Leonora?"

"That you have mistaken my character, and my motives."

Leonora, what am I to think? You love me, you say——"

"And I have said the truth. And yet I will not marry you."

"But will you wed with another?"

"Again I tell you that you have mistaken my motives. If ever I wed, it will be with that man who

first awakened my soul to a sense of love. That man is yourself."

"Leonora, you distract me. You speak in parables and enigmas, which I cannot comprehend."

"I regret that I cannot be more explicit; but I will say as much as my heart whispers to me that I may divulge. If it should please Heaven that we should ever meet in the land of my birth—in India—and if, after you have seen me there; in my own home, and all that I would there show to you, and all that I would there declare to you—if then you would say to me, 'Leonora, be mine,' most willingly would I consent."

"Dearest!" cried Reckless, passionately. "I will——"

"Hush!" exclaimed the girl, kindly, but firmly; "no protestations on your part could ever shake my settled resolve."

"I would follow you, Leonora, to the most remote corner of the earth—I would visit you in the most lowly home, or humblest shed, that ever was raised to shelter human beings—I would, proud and independent in spirit as I am, work for you as a labourer in the fields; ay, beg for you in the streets. What can you have to show me that your lips cannot now describe? What to say to me in another land which you cannot mention in this?"

"Before our hands can be joined at any altar, you must visit another clime, and see another race of people. I am not worthy of that enterprise on your part. Forget me! It were better."

"Forget thee, Leonora? Who that has ever seen thee and talked to thee, as I have, could forget thee? There is nothing you could divulge unto me that could erase from my heart the love I bear to you, Leonora."

"Ah, no ! It cannot be—unless it be in another land."

"When do you leave England?"

"A few months hence."

"May I accompany you to India?"

"If you are master of your own movements, you may do what you please. But I had rather, if we are to meet in India, that we should sail in different vessels; that you should come upon me in my home after a separation between us of at least one year or two years; that upon your arrival in that country you should not mention my name to any one, nor inquire for me, but for the station at which my father may be quartered. There will you find me in my father's house. But in what capacity would you journey so far? As a mere traveller for his amusement?"

"As a soldier. I am going into the army, and can easily get appointed to some regiment serving in the East."

"What army? The Royal army?"

"Yes; I did not know there was any other."

"There is the army of the East India Company—the army to which my father belongs."

• "Well, I don't mind joining *that* army, if you prefer it."

"No; I would not care to make India my home, even for a few years. I would prefer any other land to the land of my birth."

"Have you been unhappy there?"

"No; I have never had any cause—any just cause—for unhappiness, and I say so after having put the question to myself over and over again. I have come to the conclusion that I have no right to complain of my destiny; and that if ever I should be unhappy in this world, the fault will be mine, and mine only."

"I wish you would be less mysterious, Leonora."

"It is not possible; at least, I will not say to you in Europe what I will say to you in the East, after you have sojourned there for awhile."

"And may we correspond in the meantime?"

"Yes; I will reply to every letter I may receive from you."

"Shall our compact be kept a secret?"

"If you desire it; but for my part, I have not the least objection to any one knowing that I have accepted your offer to marry me, on certain conditions, and what are those conditions. There is one exception——"

"Which is——"

"My father!"

"He wishes you to marry some one else?"

"No one in particular. He wishes me to accept, unconditionally, the first eligible offer from a man whom I could love and respect; and to that I will never consent. 'It is not for vanity's sake that I tell you so, but I have refused many offers of marriage since I came to England—offers from men in the same position in life as yourself—but I declined all of them; for I would never marry unless I could love the husband of my choice.'"

This conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of a domestic, who announced the arrival of another visitor, a Major Listrelle, who had of late paid Miss Ornsbie a great deal of attention. The Major was a man of about forty years of age, very good-looking, and of excellent lineage and property. He had first met Miss Ornsbie at a public ball at Canterbury, where his regiment was quartered, and had been introduced to her by her father, whose acquaintance the Major

cultivated extensively. By the way, Major Listrelle had put his name down for twenty shares in every one of the Colonel's projected Companies, including the agency. He had heard of the Colonel's journey to London, and had ridden over to the Downs—a distance of nine miles—to have a quiet chat with “the lovely Leonora,” as she was now universally called. What were his feelings at finding her alone with a young gentleman, and that young gentleman Augustus Reckless, about whom all the ladies in the county were continually talking, the reader will readily conjecture. And what was even more painful to the Major, Reckless “sat him out,” albeit the Major's stay extended over an hour and a quarter.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT CAN IT BE? RECKLESS SOLILOQUISES.

“WHAT can it be?” said Reckless to himself, as he sauntered leisurely home, congratulating himself that, at all events, Leonora had confessed her love for him. “I have it—she is an illegitimate child! But, no! it cannot be that; for, in the first place, there would be no occasion for me to go to India to hear *that*. Besides, she wishes particularly that I should see her in her home. It is upon *that*, that she lays the most stress. If she *were* an illegitimate daughter of the Colonel, what would I care? Do I not love her for her beauty, and her disposition, and her artless manners? *What can it be?* I have it! She wishes to see me in her home. They have some magnificent

house and grounds which will be hers on her marriage, and she wishes me to see really what a home she can offer me. But, no! It cannot be *that*; for she does not wish to live in India, but in any other country rather than that of her birth! *What can it be?* She cannot be a widow—with a young child, perhaps, in India? No, no! It cannot be *that*; and if it were, I would marry her! Why should I see her in her own home, to hear what she has to relate? If it were anything shameful, she would not wish to show it, much less to mention it, especially when she might conceal it. She is a lady in manners, mind, and soul. For that, I have the evidence not only of my own senses, but the judgment of my mother, who could not err on such a point. Yes, I will follow her; I will see her in her own home. I will hear from her dear lips the declaration—the needless declaration, whatever it may be—that she may have to make, under the dictate of her conscience. Leonora! if thou wert even base-born; if thy ancestors had been felons; if thou wert steeped in poverty to the very lips, and clothed in rags,—all beauteous, all virtuous as thou art, I would on my knees supplicate thee to become my bride! But, *what can it be?* Why torment me thus? Why distract me? Unmoved by my entreaties, you respond, ‘*Come to India!*’ And I will go to India!”

“Not soon, Augustus, I hope,” said a gentle voice in the shrubbery, which Reckless had now penetrated. It was the voice of Lady Mary, whom Reckless, in his abstraction, had not seen, though she was close to him.

“Mother!” said Reckless, in an impassioned tone, “I am in love!”

“Well, my dear boy, and it is a very natural and a

very nice feeling—is it not? I hope you are not ‘crossed’ in your affections.”

“I am not crossed in my love; and yet I am.”

“That is absurd, dear Augustus.”

“May I make you my confidante?”

“If you wish it; but it is not a very agreeable office. I know who is the object of your affections.”

“Do you?”

“Yes.”

“How do you know it?”

“My son, the Persians, I have read, have a proverb, and a very true one. It is this: ‘*Love or Musk cannot be concealed.*’ But what is this you say about going to India? You are not thinking of marriage for three or four years to come—not until you have seen more of the world, and mixed with the people in it? I am not of opinion that it does a young man of your age any harm to be in love; on the contrary, if you love like a rational and sensible being, the circumstance of your affections being fixed will be of great advantage to you in any pursuit in which you may engage. I see not the slightest objection to your betrothing yourself to Miss Ormsbie, provided you can win her heart—for I think her quite as amiable and thoroughly good as she is beautiful; and I have seen quite sufficient to satisfy me that she would make an excellent wife, and a very prudent one. In a word, I am charmed with the girl.”

“Mother! I have already won her heart! She will be mine on certain conditions!”—and here Reckless confided to Lady Mary the whole particulars of the scene which had been enacted in the dining-room at the Downs.

"*What can it be?*" he exclaimed. "Can you assist me, mother, in forming an idea?"

"She may be"—Lady Mary checked herself, paused, and then said—"No! that cannot be. She is so very different to—No, Augustus, I cannot help you. And are those your plans? You will join a regiment serving in India?"

"Yes."

"Well, much as the idea of your going abroad will grieve us, still, if you are to make the army your profession, it is advisable that you should see something of foreign service. Some eminent General has said that no man ever became a great soldier in his own country. It was Marlborough, I think, who said so. Augustus, this is a very pretty little adventure of yours! I like it, rather. There is something so romantic about it—something so out of the common style of incident. Here is a singularly beautiful young maiden, who has a mind which, despite a want of careful cultivation, can grasp every subject which is presented thereto, and form thereon sound, sensible, and liberal views. She is utterly devoid of conceit or frivolity, and is calculated—destined—to make the man who may be the object of her choice, happy and contented. And if there could be any question as to the thorough integrity of her character, it would be set at rest by the fact that she has imposed upon you those conditions which seem to perplex you. As you have asked me to be your confidante, let me give you a piece of advice—do not press her further touching those conditions. Be contented with your case as it now stands."

"*But what can it be?*"

"Let time and circumstances disclose."

"What her motive?"

"You silly boy!—never think of asking a girl whom you would woo and wed, for a motive. Suppose her motive was, after all, caprice and nothing more? What then? You have no right to say, 'Madam, you shall not be capricious.' A husband has, I think, a perfect right to demand motives and reasons, but not a lover. I confess to you that I am myself a little curious to know why she wishes you to see her in her own home in another country; but it would be both impertinent and improper to question her."

"But what can it be? I care not what she has to say there."

"But she does—and perhaps she is right. And now let me give you another piece of advice. Do not inflict this love affair on your friends. I would not, if I were you, mention it to my brothers, or those of my sisters who are old enough to discourse on such a subject. As I have no secrets from your father, I will take an opportunity of mentioning the matter, when it will be the least likely to bore him."

"To bore him, mother?"

"Yes, my son, to bore him. I use the word advisedly."

"Has my father no interest in my affairs?"

"Of course he has; but, considering how young you are, and that it would be absurd to think of matrimony for the present, this engagement of yours—this love-suit—with Miss Ornsbie, if thrust upon him and discussed frequently, would be as irritating as a lawsuit. Will you take my advice, dear Augustus?"—and here Lady Mary laid her little white hand on the stalwart shoulder of her handsome son, and looked affectionately into his eyes.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Inflict your love affair upon no one. Indeed, my dear child, you ought not to say too much about it even to *me*; for although I have a very considerable stock of patience, remember that it is not quite inexhaustible; and remember further, that you are not my only child. Thirteen others have respective claims on that bulk of maternal anxiety which constitutes the great charm of my existence."

"Mother, I will be guided by you in all things," said Reckless. "But do you not think I have seen enough of College life?"

"Indeed, not. Only one short term? That is nothing."

"I should like to enter the army at once."

"And precede Miss Ornsbie to India?"

"No. I could exchange when the time came—that is to say, when they will be leaving England."

"No, Augustus, you must return to the University; and again I entreat you to be advised by me. *When you have once joined a regiment, never leave it, if you can possibly avoid doing so, until you abandon the military profession entirely, or until you have risen to that rank when your presence with a regiment is no longer compatible with the rules of the service.* An uncle of yours, who served with distinction in the wars, used constantly to propound that as a very sound doctrine. There are two classes of men, I have heard him say, given to constant exchanging. One class is that to which belongs the restless and dissatisfied, who have means—money; the other class is that to which belongs the stock-jobbing officer, who is always ready to bargain for something—always ready to leave his regiment, by exchange, for a money consideration. These classes trade one with the other. There is the demand and

the supply, which is evenly balanced. But you will rarely find (I am quoting your uncle's words) a man of either class who rises to a good position in the army, or who is liked or respected by the officers of the various regiments to which he may belong. Whenever an officer (he would continue) tells me that he has been in so many regiments, I always look upon him with suspicion, just as I would look upon a servant who could produce a mass of certificates, but none of them extending over a period of greater duration than five or six weeks. And if we come to think of it, Augustus, there is a good deal of reason in his remarks. No, my boy; go back to the University. It will do you all the good in the world. And when you have entered the army, cling to your original regiment until you *sell* out of it."

"Yes, yes, dear mother," returned Reckless, rather impatiently. "*But what can it be? Why does she——*"

"Augustus," said Lady Mary, in a serious tone of voice, "do not ask me for information which I have already told you I cannot give you; and, above all, do not importune Miss Ornsbie on that point. If you do, you may give her a very unfavourable impression of your character—an impression that may be fatal to those hopes which you now entertain. Return, I tell you, to Cambridge. Here is one of the maids, with a message—no doubt, from the nursery. I must leave you. Go into the library, and read a book; or take one of the horses, and have a gallop."

CHAPTER IX.

RECKLESS DOES NOT ATTEND TO A PORTION OF HIS MOTHER'S
ADVICE.

INSTEAD of reading a book or mounting a horse, Reckless, on foot, paid another visit to "the Downs." He was received by the beautiful Leonora kindly, but not so enthusiastically as he was led to expect from the reception he had met with in the morning, and from the character of the compact to which they had become parties by mutual consent. Although Leonora was not a being to be swayed by the opinion of menial servants (she had been brought up in a land where servants are looked upon as the veriest slaves, and treated accordingly), she was, nevertheless, indisposed to subject herself to those remarks which might have been made had she encouraged to remain with her, alone, during the Colonel's absence in town, a gentleman who had already paid her one visit during the day, and whom she had invited to partake of her mid-day meal.

Reckless, whose sagacity was not by any means blunted by his love for Leonora, observed and appreciated this feeling upon her part, but, strong as was his will to do so, he had not the power to tear himself away; and, notwithstanding he was uninvited even to be seated, and that Leonora herself remained standing near the fire-place, warming her hands, he could not, or rather would not, take his departure, and kept on, endeavouring to provoke her to a renewal of the conversation which, a few hours previously, they had held in the adjoining apartment—for Leonora was now in the

drawing-room of the spacious edifice her father had rented.

"You are cold, Leonora," Reckless said.

"Yes," she replied.

"You feel the climate of this country?"

"It is severe, certainly."

"We have seldom had such a winter as this. They say it has never been equalled since 1838."

"Indeed."

"The Colonel returns to-night?"

"Does he?"

"I do not know that he does. I intended my remark as a question."

"My father is very uncertain."

"If he do not, you will be lonely."

"No; solitude is sometimes companionable. And there is a terrace here, upon which I sometimes stroll and talk to the poor moon."

"Why do you say the *poor* moon?"

"She seems so unhappy in this cold land; and the heavens do not seem large enough for her to move about in."

"Are the heavens larger in the East?"

"By far."

"That is impossible."

"They seem so to the eye."

"And that, I imagine, is the same thing, dear Leonora!"

"It may be."

"Some people have it that the whole world is an optical delusion."

"With truth, perhaps."

"Is it an optical delusion that I am in the presence of the most beautiful woman in the world?"

"Most assuredly, if you think so of me."

"Ah, no!"

"The day may come when you will think me far from beautiful."

"Then you must be sadly changed."

"No—even as I now am."

"Again mysterious?"

"I did not intend to be so. But listen to me for a brief while, before I give you permission to retire. There is connected with me—aye, bound up with my very being—a mystery which even I myself cannot solve; and therefore, when I speak to you of myself, I must needs be mysterious; for in this country I could not, even if I wished it, be sufficiently explicit. To no other being have I ever said so much as I have already said to you; to no other being have I had occasion to do so; for those who have made me offers of marriage, I have rejected without assigning any reason whatsoever. If I could avoid it, I would not be mysterious with you; but how often must I tell you that you must *see*, as well as hear, what I have to relate?"

"Leonora! what could I possibly see or hear that could either increase or diminish my love for you? Nothing. If you were an empress, I could not love you more. If you were what your very self betrays that you are not—of the very meanest origin—I could not love you less. If, even—and you will forgive me the employment of such an allusion, since it is used as an illustration of my feelings—you could confess to me in another country that you had been vicious, it would cost me a sigh, but it would not kill my love for you, or alter my resolve to make you my wife."

"Dear Augustus, I can look into your eyes, and tell truthfully, that I have never been guilty of a

vicious act in my life, nor a party to any vicious act; nor have my thoughts been vicious. With respect to origin, I am quite your equal, both on the father's side and the mother's side; with regard to wealth, the matter has never entered my brain. But let it suffice, that if you visit me in my own home, you will not find me in an abode inferior to this."

"Dearest Leonora!"

"Listen further, Augustus. I have now another condition to impose upon you—for the subject to which we have just reverted is one upon which I dislike to speak, though to reflect thereon secretly gives me no pain. This last condition is, that in England you will not provoke me to say anything further of myself, or rather of the conditions which I first imposed. So far as the rules of society permit, I shall always be too happy to see and receive you, and enjoy as much of your society as possible."

A footman entered the room, with a letter upon a salver.

"You will forgive me for looking at this? It is from my father," said Leonora, breaking the seal.

Reckless bowed assent.

Leonora read aloud: "I will return the day after to-morrow. I have bought the Downs from Mr. Rothewell. Your affectionate father, P. O."

"A very short epistle," said Augustus.

"He never writes long letters," said Leonora.

"Bought the Downs! Then he does not intend to return to India?"

"Yes, he does. My father is too just a man not to return."

"But if he should not?"

"Then I do."

"Alone?"

"Yes, if need be. Yes, I will return to that home in which you are pledged to see me."

"But suppose he has sold that home?"

"My father is not a dealer. He buys, but he never sells. Sell our home!—he would as soon think of selling his soul. An European kingdom could not purchase our home."

"In what part of India is it situated?"

"In Bengal, which is a very large place. Our home is, in fact, the whole of Bengal, and governed, in a great measure, as to the locality, by the General Orders. It may be at Dum-Dum, near Calcutta; it may be at Agra, or Delhi, or Meerut, or Umballah—a thousand miles distant from the Bengal Presidency. Where you may find us, if you come to India, will depend entirely on the command he may chance to have. If, indeed, he should be appointed to the Staff, which is not improbable, our home may be in Simla, which is often the head-quarters of the Army and the Government."

"But, dearest Leonora, if your father, having bought the Downs, should stay in England, how could *your* home possibly be in one of these places?"

"My father is a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Bengal Horse Artillery. He is in England on leave only."

"But he can retire, if he thinks proper."

"My father will not think it proper to do so. He is a man who never swerves from a resolve; and he has long since determined to die in the service—the active service—of that branch of the army to which he belongs."

"I fear I am intruding on your patience."

"You have my permission to retire. You must not

think that I use that Oriental phrase with any intention of being rude to you. You must be tired of walking. Shall I order one of my father's horses to be saddled for you?—or will you ride home in my pony-chaise?"

This latter offer Reckless accepted, and presently took his departure. Previously to doing so, he received, as a gift from Leonora, a ring which she wore on the forefinger of her right hand. She placed it on the small finger of his left hand. "Its intrinsic value is very small," said she. "This little stone is a Ladâk pebble. Be very careful of it, if you value my love. You will observe, after you have worn it for some days, that it changes its colour frequently. It is sometimes the darkest blue; at other times it is green—a pale green; then it becomes so like an opal, that it might be taken for one; and then it resembles a red cornelian; and then a ruby; then a sapphire. These changes of colour are not sudden, but gradual. The history of this ring you may some day learn, if we meet in another land. It is a very curious history. The intrinsic value, I repeat, is so small that I may describe it as nothing. But thousands and thousands of men have perished in consequence of the desire of one little man to become its possessor. Dear Augustus, it was in the search for this little stone—a search prompted by the purest curiosity—that the whereabouts of the most valuable jewel in the known world was discovered—a jewel for which Russia offered more than a million sterling. Will you be careful of this little ring—this little stone, Augustus? You must! For remember, if I do not see it upon your finger when we meet in another land, I can never become your wife. I fear I shall tire you with all these conditions, which are becoming as numerous as the

changes in colour of this poor bauble ; and, ere long, you will fling me from your memory, just as a gardener throws away some worthless weed."

CHAPTER X.

OUR HERO REVISITS CAMBRIDGE.—MRS. CROPPITT REASONS.

THE vacation was over, and Reckless returned to "the seat of learning" for another term. He found his little friend, Mr. West, still hard at work on his "patient pupil"—so Chayworth was now spoken of.

"I shall get him through, Reckless," said West, confidently; "but they are betting very heavy odds against it—even so much as five to two. I have had a sad time of it, he has been so very fretful and fidgetty during his illness and his studies; but my labours, something tells me, will soon be brought to a successful close, and then I hope to have a little relaxation. But you are not looking well, Reckless; you are pale and haggard. What is the matter? Have you been dissipating?"

"No, West," replied Reckless; "I have only been falling in love."

"In love? Oh! how I should like to be in love, Reckless. It must be such a pleasant feeling!"

"*You* in love, West! You are not big enough to be in love."

"Not big enough, Reckless? You are always reflecting on my size. Not big enough? Paris was not the biggest of Priam's sons. The smaller the man, in my opinion, the greater the flame." All our celebrated heroes of small proportions have been very ardent lovers,

Reckless. I could love a lady six feet high, if she were beautiful. Are you happy in your love, Reckless?"

"I am—but I am not."

"'Tis better to be unhappy in our love."

"Why do you think that?"

"Simply because

Successful love may sate itself away—

The wretched only are the faithful.

For my part, Reckless, I should like to nurture in my heart a love as hopeless as that of Petrarch or of Tasso. I should like to love a woman utterly beyond my reach; but to whom, with my dying breath, I could utter such lines as these:—

Thou, Leonora! Thou who wert ashamed
That such as I could love—who blushed to hear
To less than monarchs that thou couldst be dear,
Go! Tell thy brother, that my heart, untamed,
Adores thee still!

That thou, when all that birth and beauty throws
Of magic round thee is extinct, shall have
One-half the laurel that o'ershades my grave.
No power in death can tear our names apart,
As none in life could rend thee from my heart.

Yes, Leonora! It shall be our fate
To be entwined for ever—but too late!

"What is the matter, Reckless? What have I said to make you look so woe-begone?"

"Nothing, West—nothing! Whose lines are those? Yours?"

"No, Reckless; they are Byron's. You will find them at the conclusion of *Tasso's Lament*."

"I wish I had not heard them, West."

"Why, Reckless?"

"Because——"

It was in Reckless's room that this conversation

took place; and at the very moment that Reckless uttered the word "because," Mrs. Croppitt entered the room, made a curtsy, and said, "I beg your pardon, sir; but my sister, Mrs. Coleby, having heard from me that you have come up again, begs me to express a hope that Sir Charles and Lady Mary Reckless are quite well."

"Thank Mrs. Coleby on my behalf, Mrs. Croppitt," said Reckless. "Thank her very much, and say that in the course of a day or two I will do myself the pleasure of paying her another visit."

"Thank you, sir," said Mrs. Croppitt. "Do you remember seeing a half-witted gentleman at her house when you first called there?"

"Yes; and took a very great interest in him, Mrs. Croppitt."

"Well, sir, he has been missing for the last month, and no one can make out what has become of him. The last time he was seen was in a gig with a gentleman—a gentleman who looked as old as he looks, and a stranger to all our townsfolk—leastways, those who saw him with Mr. Brown did not know who he was. It is a very curious business altogether. My sister thinks he has been carried off for a purpose, sir."

"What purpose, Mrs. Croppitt?"

"Well, sir, it is said that if Mr. Brown outlives some other gentleman who is much older than himself, he will come into another fortune as big as the one he ran through."

"Well?"

"And that he has been taken away from this in consequence, by a next of kin, or something of that sort."

"But what would they do with him?"

"Make him drink himself to death, perhaps, sir."

Give him whatever he calls for—murder him in that way. They are calling out for a law to stop the sale of poisons, forgetting that brandy or gin will do the business just as surely, but not so quick (which is all the worse), as laudanum or prussic acid.”

“But he never calls for drink, I am told.”

“Yes, he does, sir; and when it will do him good, it is given to him. When he looks cast down and dejected, those who knew him when he had more fifty pounds than he has now farthings, place in his hands a glass of port or sherry; and at one or two of the hotels, they will sometimes give him a pint-bottle of the best champagne. At other times, when he calls for brandy, whiskey, port, sherry, champagne, hock, claret, or other wines, or spirits, they give him cold tea, or toast-and-water; and he drinks it off without knowing the difference. By saying ‘yes,’ he is kept quiet; by saying ‘no,’ he would be driven mad and violent. I could kill that man in two days.”

“Then you would be hanged,” said West.

“Oh dear, no, sir. I could kill him in such a way that the law could not take hold of me; and, what is more, I should be very much praised for my course of conduct. I would simply kill him by contradiction; the only word I would use would be ‘no;’ or if I got tired of repeating that word, I would say ‘you sha’n’t.’ There are more people killed by contradiction than you think for. I could kill my husband with it at any time; and just as well, though not quite so soon, as if I were to do the business with a dagger or a pistol. As it is, I only half kill him, and that puts more life into him, you see, sir.” And with these words Mrs. Croppitt withdrew, and left the two young gentlemen to resume their discourse.

Reckless, once more heedless of his mother's advice, inflicted upon West the whole story of his love ; and informed him, amongst other matters, that the name of the lady happened to be Leonora. West, notwithstanding the great interest that he had in all that related to the affairs of his dear friend Reckless, yawned not unfrequently during the continuance of the narrative ; and this satisfies me that the reader would most possibly do the same, if I were to chronicle all that fell from the lips of Reckless on that occasion. Be it known, however, that he expatiated very freely on Leonora's beauty and her excellent qualities, and wound up by asking West to repeat to him once more the couplet which had made him so miserable when he heard it for the first time :—

Yes, Leonora ! It shall be our fate
To be entwined for ever—but too late !

CHAPTER XI.

THIS CHAPTER, WHICH IS DEDICATED ENTIRELY TO THE READER,
TREATS OF A GREAT CHARACTER.

THE reader will do me the favour to remember that I said, in the preceding chapter, that she, or he, would most possibly yawn if I were to chronicle all that fell from the lips of Reckless, in his conversation with his friend Mr. West, concerning his love for the beautiful Leonora Ornsbie. But the reader must understand, distinctly, that Reckless was by no means a silly lover, who went about boring all his friends with the peculiar circumstances of his suit. As yet he has spoken to no one on the subject except the young lady herself, his

own mother, and his particular friend. With the rest of his companions and acquaintances he was just as joyous and light-hearted as he was wont to be. There was upon his mind, it is true, a constant and irritating *renvoye* of that question, *What can it be?* but he did not, therefore, make himself offensive to those with whom he came ordinarily in contact. So far from this being the case, Reckless was, if possible, livelier than ever; and as soon as West had gone back to attend Chayworth, and administer unto him what was jocularly described as "the mixture as before" (meaning the Homer, the Virgil, and the Euclid), he donned his cap and gown, and sallied forth to visit a number of townspeople whom he knew, and to whom the reader must be introduced. The first was a Mr. Parry, an animal painter, residing in a street near the Market-place. He took what he called "likenesses" of favourite horses or dogs belonging to undergraduates. He kept specimens in his window, which were admirably painted. Parry said these were his own,—meaning that he had painted them,—and he had said this so often, he believed it to be true; still, these specimens, with which he would not part, were so very different to those pictures which he painted for money, it was very difficult to credit his assertions in that respect. Parry had been formerly an actor—a provincial actor—and he was very enthusiastic still, on all matters connected with his old profession; and, when his blood was warmed with wine or liquor, he would give you all the favourite speeches from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, &c. He used to play these parts on the boards, he said, and firmly believed; but in this respect also his word was secretly doubted.

Mrs. Parry, too, had been upon the stage in early

life, and had played "all Mrs. Siddons's parts," she used to say. It was impossible, however, to get her to repeat a passage from Shakspeare; she invariably excused herself on the plea that her memory had gone, and that she had lost that voice which she once had. Many of Dacre's set visited this rather eccentric couple; it was Dacre, indeed, who introduced Reckless to them.

When Reckless knocked at the door on the day in question, Parry was sitting over the fire in the kitchen, smoking a short pipe, and drinking his afternoon portion of whiskey and water; but before Mrs. Parry had let the visitor into the house, he was in his "studio," paint-brush in one hand, and palette in the other, having donned previously, with astounding rapidity, a fanciful cap and dressing-gown.

"Hard at work, as usual, Parry?" said Reckless, on being admitted to the artist.

"Yes, sir; I have promised Lord Maulfield that he shall have this portrait of his famous dog on the last day of the present month. It is in Landseer's style—this is. Just mark the expression of his eye," said Parry, proudly.

"It is superb," said Reckless, suppressing with much difficulty the inward laughter which a contemplation of the miserable daub occasioned—the head and the legs were so frightfully out of proportion with the body of the handsome dog it was intended to represent.

"Yes; I flatter myself there are few men of the present day who could beat that, Mr. Reckless."

"I want you to come and sup with me to-night, Parry. Mr. Dacre and several other friends, all known to you, are coming."

"It will afford me the greatest pleasure, Mr. Reckless; but it must be on one condition."

"Namely?"

"That you will let me come away early—say 'at eleven o'clock.'"

"By all means, if you wish it."

"Mrs. Parry, you see, is always so nervous when I am away from her."

On leaving, Reckless proceeded to Massaroni's. Massaroni was an old Italian, who took casts of heads and faces, and sold plaster of Paris images of his own manufacture. "Well, old man," said Reckless, in a kind tone of voice, on entering the workshop, "have you finished that cast of my head?"

"Yes, sir; here it is."

"I wish you would let one of your boys bring it to Mr. Linney's."

"That phrenologist professor?"

"Yes. Last term he gave me half-a-crown's worth of magnificent character, and now I am going to hear what he says about this cast."

"It is not a good cast, sir; you moved your features, and see, the neck is crooked."

"All the better, Massaroni, for the purpose I intend it, just now. You shall take another of me some day."

Mr. Linney, the Professor of Phrenology, prided himself on going "twice as far as even Deville." He divided the head into something like sixty or seventy parts; and after manipulating the cranium for some fifteen minutes—looking immensely serious all the while—he would run on thus, his assistant taking down his words as they were from time to time uttered in a loud, grave voice:—"Keep down 29, 37; raise up 16, 22; keep down 41, 47; raise up 30, 35; keep down 4, 11, 13; raise up 18, 19, 20; expand 2, 5; contract

1, 12, 39; and the result will be, that, in the course of a year, your head will be considerably altered in shape, and your abilities proportionately increased." Linney, in fact, measured a head for a complete suit of character and talents, just in the same way that a tailor measures a body for a complete suit of clothing. Linney was a travelling phrenologist; but, when in Cambridge, he lodged in Jesus Lane.

"Good afternoon, 'Mr. Linney,'" said Reckless, entering his museum.

"Happy to see you, sir," said the professor.

"I have brought a cast which I should like you to examine."

"With all the pleasure in the world, sir. It affords me the most unspeakable joy to talk with intellectual gentlemen concerning the great science, if they really take an interest in it."

"This, Mr. Linney, is the head of an atrocious culprit, who was hanged last winter in Norwich for the murder of his father and mother."

"You need not have told me that; I see it, sir."

"Where?"

"In the formation of his head."

"The features are contorted, as you see; and here is the mark of the rope."

"That does not signify. The skull is all I care for." And here Linney took the cast, and manipulated the various organs with an earnestness of look and gravity of manner which were intensely ridiculous.

"I am greatly obliged to you, Mr. Reckless," Linney began, "for bringing me the cast of this head. It is, indeed, a splendid specimen, and completely proves the soundness of my theory. This man, sir, was not deficient in ability—in intellect; but just put your

finger upon his 'Firmness.' In *his* case it amounted to obstinacy. And then observe this frightful development of 'Combativeness,' and then his enormous 'Acquisitiveness.' Those three organs, represented respectively by 21, 16, and 11, had a complete ascendancy over his 6, 24, and 32—representing respectively Benevolence, Conscientiousness, and Veneration. What was the result? The gallows! Had he, as he might have done, raised up his 6, 24, 32, and depressed his 21, 16, 11, this man would have been, perhaps, an ornament to society."

"Poor wretch!" sighed Reckless. "But if you look at the back of the head, it is comparatively small; and according to first principles, his intellectual predominated considerably over his animal or vicious propensities."

"We must not be guided by first principles, Mr. Reckless. That is the great mistake. Besides, this man was evidently of a very sanguine temperament."

"Sanguinary, you mean?"

"It amounts to the same thing, sir. Had he been of a bilious or lymphatic temperament, his brain would probably have been less active."

"What about his ideality?"

"Well developed. But then look at his 67—his Caution. His 67 acted as a check on his 39. Caution is to Ideality what a log and chain is to the human leg."

"Then why did not Caution step in when he entertained the idea of killing his parents?"

Here Mr. Linney pursed his lips, looked mysteriously into Reckless's eyes, tapped with his huge forefinger the apex of the ^{cast} and said, with an air of confidence, and in an extremely grave voice, "Here, |

here ! His 21—his leading organ—his Obstinacy—this was the rock on which this man split."

"No ; it was upon himself that he split," said Reckless, playing on the word, and inwardly smiling, rather contemptuously. "He confessed. It was thus that the murder was discovered. What organ induced him to confess ?"

"Here it is ! His 80—his Hope !" Linney scratched the organ with his thumb-nail.

"Hope of what, Mr. Linney ?"

"Pardon in this world, and of forgiveness in the next. There must have been a terrible struggle going on for some time between his 80 and his 21." Here Linney leant over the plaster of Paris cast, and gazed at it very intently for at least two minutes. Meanwhile Reckless put to himself these questions, and made inwardly the following remarks :—"Is this man an impostor ? That is to say, does he know that he is talking nonsense ? Does he really believe in the science to the extent that he professes ? I will give him the benefit of the doubt, and ask him to sup with me ; and he shall manipulate every head in the company if he likes—Parry's included."

Mr. Linney accepted the invitation with thanks ; and Reckless, taking the cast under his arm, and covering it with his gown, returned to the old Italian's workshop.

Massaroni, albeit he was a political refugee, was a very respectable, well-informed, and harmless old man, who had been for several years in the town of Cambridge, making an honest livelihood by his adopted trade. His original occupation in his own country had been that of an advocate. Reckless also invited Massaroni to sup at his rooms, and the old man ex-

pressed that it would give him very great joy. The old man had a strong liking and regard for all the Dacre set, and Reckless was one of his especial favourites.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SUPPER-PARTY AT RECKLESS'S ROOMS; AND HOW IT ENDED.

NINE o'clock came, and the guests began to assemble. At half-past nine all were present; and shortly afterwards, the supper, which was a very magnificent supper, and composed chiefly of game of all kinds—(by the way, it did not cost Reckless anything)—was laid upon the table by Rorcher and his assistants, all of whom were gyps belonging to the College. Mrs. Croppitt, too, was there, “seeing that everything was proper,” and arranging the decanters, the spoons, and the forks on the sideboard much oftener than was necessary. She was not, however, requested to give herself no further trouble and go home; for the members of the set to which Reckless had been “admitted,” or rather “received” (and a very lucky youth he was to have been so “admitted” or “received”), encouraged rather than discouraged the bed-maker to remain, inasmuch as her presence in the rooms would frequently, or, at all events, sometimes, act as a check upon the tone of the conversation.

“To have studied the liberal arts and sciences thoroughly” (says that old friend, or horrible enemy, of most of us, the Eton Latin Grammar), “softens the manners and sentiments, and suffers them not to be brutal;”

but where a number of young gentlemen have met to sup, and drink, and sing, in my humble judgment, the knowledge that there is within hearing a nicely, cleanly, and simply-clad female, like Mrs. Croppitt—notwithstanding her little faults or weaknesses—is marvellously more effective, especially if those young gentlemen have during the day studied sufficiently of the liberal arts and sciences.

It has been casually remarked that this “game supper” of Reckless—a supper for sixteen persons—cost Reckless nothing. It must not, therefore, be supposed that he was in the habit of ordering entertainments for which he did not intend to pay, or that there lurked in his mind the faintest idea of defrauding his creditors in general, or Mr. Hudson in particular. But the truth was simply this. Reckless received frequently from the Castle, and from others, hampers of game, which he used to hand over bodily to Rorcher for his own use and benefit, upon a certain condition—which was, that Rorcher kept Reckless’s supper-table twice a month extremely well supplied, and free of cost. Rorcher used to say that this arrangement was a very profitable one to him, and wished that he had several other gentlemen on the same terms.

All was ready, and Rorcher, in that confidential way that he had, whispered as much into the ear of Reckless.

“That’s well!” exclaimed Reckless. “Dacre, will you take the other end of the table? Massaroni, sit you here on my right; Parry, you must be on my left. I have a great deal to say to you, after the eating is over. Mr. Linney, don’t go so far away. Dearson, let Mr. Linney have that chair, and sit near——Ah! that’s very nicely arranged.”

The covers were lifted, and the repast commenced. The conversation soon became brisk as the champagne, and general. All enjoyed themselves. It is needless to say more on this head. The cloth removed, Reckless addressed Dacre in as loud a tone of voice as the distance between them demanded. "I have been talking to Parry," said he, "about Macready and Anderson, and he does not think so highly of the former as you do."

"Indeed!" said Dacre.

"No," said Reckless. "And he has promised me that he will give us one or two little favourite bits from *The Stranger*, if the company would like to hear them."

"I speak the sentiments of this end of the table when I say we should be delighted," said Dacre.

"Then suppose we make something like a stage?" said Reckless, rising; and in another moment every one rose from his seat, and assisted the host in his labours. Extra candles were lighted; the table was pushed on one side; the chairs were arranged for the audience at the end of the room; and presently Parry, who had retired for a few moments previously (for effect, he said), re-entered the room through the folding-door, and strutted, ranted, and raved after a fashion that was sufficient to convulse with laughter any one who had the faintest sense of the ridiculous.

"That's how we used to do it," said Parry; "but I am rather rusty now, confound it!"

"Not at all rusty," said Reckless—an opinion which was endorsed by the rest of the company. "But drink some more champagne, and don't act any more, for I am afraid it will distress you. Are you not a little hoarse?"

"Never was in better voice in my life," replied

Parry; "I feigned a huskiness just now; for you see the speech that I spoke was after the Stranger had jumped into the water to save the child; and it was only natural to suppose that he had taken cold, from the sudden chill. That is a *point*. Don't you see, Mr. Reckless?"

"I should never have thought of that," said Reckless. "How well you did it! I give you my word, Parry, I thought it was real." (And so it was, reader. Parry was always hoarse, and spoke huskily.)

"I will give you a little bit of *Othello* presently," said Parry.

"Oh! pray do," said Dacre and several others.

"What bit would you like, gentlemen?" asked Parry.

"Any you please," was the general reply.

"The last speech?—'Softly, a word or two before you go.'"

"Yes."

"But I should like to go into the next room, and make up," said Parry.

"Come along," cried Reckless. "And you will come, Dacre, and assist us." And into the bed-room walked Reckless, Parry, and Dacre. Here they blacked the actor's face and neck with a cork and some butter. Very black, indeed, they made him; for Parry, in reply to a question from Dacre, as to whether Othello was not tawny merely, replied very positively, "Tawny be hanged! He was as black as my hat. The blacker he is on the stage, the better; besides, it gives the eyes a finer expression. That's right; rub it in, Mr. Reckless."

When Parry was perfectly black, Reckless and Dacre tied a linen night-gown round his head to represent a

turban; and this was all that they could possibly do to make a Moor of Parry.

"Dash it all," said the Moor; "the room is so small, comparatively speaking, that if I were to let out as I used to let out when I played to large audiences at York and other places, I should blow the roof off the building."

"Do not fear that," said Reckless: "I will open the windows, by way of a safety-valve. Give it to them as loudly as you please or can; and die in the way you talked about this evening—à la Edmund Kean."

"All right, Mr. Reckless," said Parry. "Now you and Mr. Dacre go in and take your places, and I will appear in less than three minutes. The house—I mean the company—must calm itself down, and be prepared to receive me. I must enter amidst solemn silence."

This was accorded to him; and, when all was attention, Parry, with that peculiar zigzag walk which foreign critics think "so funny" when they behold it on the British stage, made his appearance. He began rather mildly, speaking in almost a whisper—a stage whisper; but by the time he got to the words,

Set you down this; and say, besides,

his harsh and husky voice was fearfully loud; and by the time he came to the words,

Took by the throat,

his vehemence positively knew no bounds. At

Smote him thus!

he fell very heavily on the floor, and then went through the process of what he used to call "Kean's best death," his "Othello death"—a process which struck

the whole of the gentlemen present as far more ingenious than natural. Dacre, in a very quiet and very kind way, intimated as much to Parry, who, seldom at a loss for a reply, remarked, "Othello stabbed himself, Mr. Dacre, on the stage. How could a man who stabs himself in that way die a *natural* death? It was a *violent* death that he died, sir. And I have given you a violent death, with all its awful struggles."

"True, true," cried 'Reckless; "I never thought of that before."

"An actor should always keep to his points, Mr. Dacre," said Parry. "Be minute, and you must be successful."

"Moisten your throat, Parry," said Reckless. "But, while you are warm, give us that glorious little bit from *Coriolanus*—that glorious little bit you mentioned to me—that bit where Aufidius calls him a boy, and he replies, 'If you have writ your annals true,' &c."

"I shall want a Roman toga for that," said Parry.

"Shall I get you a sheet?" said Reckless.

"The table-cloth would be better," suggested Dacre.

"Certainly," said Parry, who was now imbibing simultaneously the wine, and the compliments of the company, and who became so affected by the mixture, that he was utterly oblivious to the fact that his face and neck were as black as ink—"Certainly," he repeated; "the table-cloth is the thing." And, with wonderful rapidity, he was therein attired by his host, assisted by Dacre.

"Off you go," said Reckless.

Parry went off accordingly. As in Othello; he began mildly the famous speech; but by the time he came to the words,

Boy! False hound!
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there
That, like an eagle in a dove-cot, I
Fluttered your Voices in Corioli.
Alone I did it!—Boy!

he shrieked so violently, and in a tone so horribly discordant, that one of the tutors of the College, who kept in rooms not far off, rushed in, without being announced, and at the very moment that Parry was concluding that theatrical pant which he considered absolutely necessary for illustrating the character of the passion under which Coriolanus was labouring when Aufidius taunted him with being a traitor.

“What is the meaning of this, Mr. Reckless?” demanded the tutor, who was greatly agitated, and unable to comprehend the spectacle.

“Coriolanus, sir,” said Reckless.

“Nonsense, sir. And who are you, sir?” (He spoke to Parry, imagining that that character, with a coal-black face and enveloped in a snowy white table-cloth, was a member of the College.)

“I am a poor player,” said Parry, rather aptly. “A poor player, who frets and struts his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more.”

“Well, sir, in your case,” said the tutor, still very angry, “I hope you will *not* be heard any more. When you say that you are a *poor* player, I agree with you entirely.” And with these words the tutor withdrew, leaving every one, except Parry, in roars of laughter. There were no further performances on that night. Nevertheless, Parry did not evince any desire to take his departure. He sat until a quarter to three, and then went home in his Othello face, sadly to the detri-

ment of his wife's nerves. Nor could he, until he had slept upon it, give her any satisfactory account of himself, nor explain to her how it was that his visage became so "begrimed and black."

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAYWORTH BECOMES A BACHELOR OF ARTS.

THE morning came for John Chayworth to attend at the Senate House, to undergo his examination. West accompanied him to the door, repeating his assurances that Chayworth had nothing to fear, if he would only have confidence in himself. There were some very heavy bets pending on the result, whatever it might be. The odds were five to two that Chayworth would be plucked, notwithstanding the care with which he had been trained. It was not until after the examination was over that Chayworth came to the knowledge of this fact, that large sums had been staked upon him, and then he became anxious to have a small venture himself. "Five to two," he cried out, "that my name will not be in the list, although I had not much trouble with any of the papers, thanks to my little friend here." Several persons took his offer.

At length the list came out. With eager eyes, West and Dacre, besides many others, scanned it. They began at the bottom of the list, and not finding Chayworth amongst "the Apostles," West's heart literally sank within him, and the sigh that he breathed might have been heard at a distance of several yards. Dacre groaned and threw the paper on the floor, for he had

betted in favour of Chayworth's success. In an agony of despair, West picked up the paper, and, being somewhat interested in the fate of another man, he began to read off, beginning from the top of the list. He had not exhausted more than half of the names when he involuntarily ejaculated, "Good Heaven!"

"What is the matter?" said Dacre. "Why are you so pale?"

"There cannot be two John Chayworths of Trinity?"

"No."

"Then, do my eyes deceive me? Look here!"

Dacre took the paper from West's hand, and stared for some seconds at the name; then breaking out into a loud laugh, he shook West's hand very warmly, and congratulated him on his triumph. The next step was to find Chayworth, who, since the examination, had been very uncertain in his movements. After a long search, he was discovered, by Dacre and West, at the "Greyhound," playing a match at billiards with a very famous player, a St. John's man. The room was crowded with spectators.

"Let us not disturb the game," whispered Dacre to West. "Let us wait till it is over, and then let *me* talk to him. We will have a little fun before he knows the real truth."

Presently the marker called out "Game!" Chayworth had made a five stroke, which concluded it.

"There, my boy!" said Chayworth, approaching West. "If they would only let me take a degree in billiards, I'd be a Wrangler to a certainty."

"Are you aware that the list is published?" said Dacre.

"No; is it?" said Chayworth. "I am plucked, of course?"

"Well——" Dacre was about to speak further, when Chayworth continued:—

"Oh! I knew how it would be; I was as certain of it as I was of winning that game of billiards. But never mind; it can't be helped. We must have our pluck-party to-night, as usual. Don't look so solemn, West; I am more sorry for you than myself; but bear your disappointment like a man. The fault was not yours, Heaven knows."

"But it is a very disagreeable affair, you must confess," said Dacre.

"Not when you are so used to it as I am," replied Chayworth, balancing his cue on his forefinger. "Pluck-party—supper for eighteen. Tell Rorcher, West—do, please. And, like a dear boy, tell all my most intimate friends that they *must* come. I cannot leave this place just now, for my adversary will want his revenge."

"Suppose you have your pluck-party in my rooms to-night, Chayworth?" said Dacre. "Last year, when you had it at Hortney's rooms, you promised me that you would."

"By the way, so I did," said Chayworth. "Well, be it so."

Dacre and West then left their friend in the billiard-room, and proceeded to the College to give the required orders, and to warn Rorcher and Mrs. Croppitt, as well as the porter and under-porters and several other people, not to speak to Mr. Chayworth on the subject of his degree; or, at all events, not to inform him of his good fortune. Those who were invited to the party were also informed of the little plot which Dacre had devised for keeping Chayworth in ignorance of his success until his health had been drunk and he had returned thanks.

It was the witching hour, and the lamps were shining brightly in Dacre's rooms, when Chayworth stalked in and stood amongst his friends, resembling, to some extent, or in one particular, the late Duke of Wellington at the Waterloo Banquet, inasmuch as he was the great hero of the evening. Very few allusions were made touching the plucking, and those few were far from being of a dismal character. The cloth withdrawn, Dacre rose, and in a short speech proposed "The health of their worthy friend, Mr. John Chayworth." After a few minutes, Chayworth, who, notwithstanding his obtuseness in classical matters, could speak well and fluently, stood up and spoke as follows:—"Gentlemen, I thank you from the very bottom of my heart for the kind and cordial manner in which you have responded to the proposal of my excellent friend, Mr. Dacre. This is the sixth time that I have had the honour, if I may so speak, of returning my annual thanks under circumstances precisely similar" (loud laughter); "and, gentlemen, I have yet within me a lingering hope that it will not be the *last* time" (renewed laughter). "Gentlemen, my belief is that I shall spend my days at this College. What degree on earth could compensate me for the misery I should endure in parting from men in whose society I have such real enjoyment? Yes, so long as my uncle lives, here, I feel it, am I to live" (immense cheering). "Gentlemen, I am glad to hear you laugh and cheer; for it satisfies me that, although you may be sorry I have not been successful in passing, still you are not yet tired of me as a companion. Nevertheless, my joy on this occasion is not unmingled with regret. It pains me to think that the labours of my dear little friend opposite—dear little West—should have been wasted on an attempt as vain seemingly as

that of the poor wretch in the infernal regions, whose employment is to roll constantly a heavy stone up a steep hill—a stone to which I may, very truthfully, compare myself. It is but just to myself, however, to say that I did my best. When those horrid papers were placed before me, I thought of that dear boy (West) opposite” (cheers and laughter); “I thought of his oft-repeated entreaties that I would cease to think, while reading with him, of my horses, my dogs, my sweethearts, and other matters in which it has been my habit to delight; I thought of his advice not to take even one glass of sherry or champagne previous to entering those awful portals of that awful Senate House. Perhaps that abstinence may have had, upon this last occasion, something to do with this sixth omission of my name in the list” (laughter and cheers). “But I do not blame West; and it gives me great joy to see him join you in your hearty hilarity” (screams of laughter). “Would that I could think, my dear West, that your merriment was not assumed in order to conceal your disgust! My dear Dacre, and my dear friends here assembled, when I call to my mind that dear boy’s patience and perseverance, and contrast it with my own petulance and ill-humour at times—when I remember his energy and my lassitude, I feel really and truly ashamed of myself—ashamed that I should have absorbed so much of his valuable time to no sort of purpose” (loud cries of “Bravo, Chayworth!” “Bravo!” “We respect your sentiments!” “Bravo!” “Go on!”).

At this moment there was a loud knocking at the door. The servants had all gone, for Dacre had told them their presence was no longer required on that evening.

"Come in!" said Dacre.

In walked the Dean. Addressing himself to Dacre, he spoke as follows, in a quiet and gentlemanlike tone of voice:—"I have not for many years past heard so great a noise in the Court; and during your occupancy of these rooms, Mr. Dacre, I must say that the——"

"This is my pluck-party, sir," said Chayworth, interrupting him, and still standing.

"Your presence here, Mr. Chayworth," said the Dean, "is the only excuse that I can accept for the uproar; and I am very glad of this opportunity of congratulating you upon the event."

"Why, last year, sir, you expressed your sorrow when they plucked me; you did so, feelingly."

"And so I should have done this year, had you been equally unfortunate."

"What more could they do than pluck me, sir? Am I not plucked?"

"Certainly not. There is but one man belonging to this College plucked; and you are not that man?"

"Is this, then, an English night?" asked Chayworth, "or is it an Arabian night? Do I dream? Are you the Dean, sir? and am I John Chayworth?"

"Of course you are," said Dacre; "and you have passed for your degree. We have been practising a little deceit upon you."

"Oh!" groaned Chayworth, seating himself; "I won't believe it!"

"Don't make more noise than you can help, Mr. Dacre," said the Dean, withdrawing, and laughing.

"Don't be alarmed, sir," said Chayworth; "this unexpected news has quite overpowered me, and dashed my spirits."

It was very late before the party broke up; but at

eight o'clock on the following morning, John Chayworth paid a visit to West. He found the little man in bed, reading a letter he had just received from his sister.

"What! Not up yet?" said Chayworth. "Is not this contrary to your habit?"

"Yes," replied West; "but what with the wine that I drank, and the noise that was made, my head ached, and I could not close my eyes till long after daylight."

"Why do you sigh?" asked Chayworth.

"Because I am unhappy."

"What should make you unhappy?"

"This disgusting position of mine—accepted as a scholar by the College, yet treated as a menial servant by all save yourself and your friends. I feel ashamed to move about within these walls. If it was not for her sake, I would leave the University."

"Whose sake?"

"My sister's. Taking a degree, becoming a clergyman, and getting a curacy, is the only hope of her finding a happy home—a home which she can call, and will feel, her own."

"Where is she?"

"At a school."

"Then she is very young?"

"No; she is nineteen."

"And at school still?"

"Yes; she is an assistant governess."

"On a salary of——"

"No salary; they board and clothe her in return for her services."

"West, I came here at this early hour—an hour at which, as you are aware, I do not often rise—to thank you in private for all that you have done for me, and

to point out to you the exact nature of the very great obligations I am under to you. It is but right that I should do so, because it will, or it should, operate upon your mind as a reason for accepting certain offers of mine which I am about to make. I, too, have often thought of the awkwardness and the unpleasantness of your present position, and it will give me the greatest satisfaction if you will allow me to alter it. Leave this College, and enter at some other as a pensioner. The expenses incurred by your education I will most cheerfully defray. And remember, West, if it had not been for your efforts, I should have been here for several years to come, perhaps, and then not have succeeded in getting a degree. Think of that, West—only think of that. Don't stay here; go to Downing, or to Trinity Hall, or to Jesus, or Corpus, or any other gentlemanlike institution, where you would be more comfortable. What do you mean by that sigh? Will you not accept my offer? If you will not, it is because one kind of pride is stronger than another kind of pride."

"How much would my education cost you between this and the time of taking my degree, two years hence?"

"Well, my boy, let us put it down at £500."

"The very sum!" exclaimed the little man, rising up in his bed, and taking a firm hold of Chayworth's wrist. "The very identical sum!"

"Identical sum for what?"

"But I do not ask it as a gift. I ask it as a loan, repayable by instalments during a period of ten years; for I would live as quietly and as economically as possible, and save every farthing."

"You surely do not wish to embark in business?"

"Oh, no! I wish to enter the army, and the price of a commission in the line is £500—so the General told me."

"Are you serious, my dear boy?" said Chayworth, kindly, and rising from the chair upon which he sat.

"Yes," said West. "Something tells me that I was not destined for the pulpit, or for the court, but for the camp and the battle-field. I dream of military glory and renown. 'Give me the means of becoming a soldier instead of a minister!' cried the youth, ecstatically, large tear-drops standing in his eyes—"Give me the means, and——"

"West, the means will be at your service the day after to-morrow; but——"

"God be thanked!" exclaimed the poor youth, bursting into tears, and raising his little arms above his head. "Oh, God! the dream of my life from childhood up is realized!"

"But it requires interest as well as money to obtain a commission, West. They have not a counter at the Horse Guards over which they receive the notes and gold, and give you the piece of parchment in return."

"I know that, Chayworth; I know that. The interest I have always had, but not the capital. With the ability to buy, my name will be in the *Gazette* before the expiration of one month."

"Then the arrangement will be a very pretty one," said Chayworth, laughing; "you have given me the means of getting into the Church, and I will give you the means of getting into the army. You present me with half-a-dozen white neckcloths, and some bands, and I present you with a sword; and there we will go, cutting our way through life with our respective weapons."

"Oh! how my heart palpitates," said little West.
"It gives me some pain. Alas!—"

In medio fonte leporum—surg——"

"Enough! enough of that!" cried Chayworth.
"I'll soon satisfy you that military skill would be of small avail against physical force, if you ever talk to me in Latin or Greek again. Those languages I often wished 'dead' in reality; and now, so far as I am concerned, they are so, and what is more, they may be something else for all I care. I feel at this moment like a mute returning from a funeral, with a clay pipe in one hand, and a tankard of strong ale in the other."

"Is it real?" said West, looking anxiously in Chayworth's face. "Can it be possible?"

"For my part, I cannot believe it," was the reply.

"Am I dreaming?"

"Am I?"

"What? What are you dreaming?"

"That I have crossed the Rubicon!—That I am a B.A.!"

• "That is certain, dear Chayworth. But am I dreaming that I shall be a soldier—an officer in the British army?"

"It is a reality, if £500 in your hand can obtain your commission."

The little man's head fell back upon his pillow. He closed his eyes; the action of the lids caused the tears to coze out and trickle down his pale cheeks; there was a sweet smile playing about his mouth; the expression upon his face was that which hovers over the features of a woman who has just given birth to her first child.

There are critics who have contended that that line of Byron's—

The rapture of repose was there—

is nonsense, inasmuch as there can be no Rapture in Repose; but could they have seen little West lying on his bed on that morning, and the burly John Chayworth bending over him, they would possibly have retracted their opinion, so dogmatically expressed.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAYWORTH TAKES HIS DEPARTURE FROM CAMBRIDGE.

A LARGE number of persons—townsmen as well as gownsmen—met at the Hoops to see Mr. Chayworth off, on the occasion of his leaving the University; and very many were rather sorry than glad of his success, since it would deprive them of his company. Rorcher, the gyp, was sorely moved when the coach was out of sight; and as for Mrs. Croppitt, she cried bitterly. "It is a thousand pities, sir," she remarked to Reckless, on returning to his rooms, "that he should be taken away from us. We are so used to him; we have known him so long; it seems like coming from the funeral of a dear relative or friend; and we feel it all the more, coming, as it did, so unexpected, for no one ever thought as he would ever get through. But God be with him, kind-hearted gentleman that he is! He has left me his old cap and gown, and his tops and cords and pink—the identical ones that got him once into trouble, when his tutor seized them from his servant's hands, and he threatened to bring an action at

law for their recovery—and so long as I live I will never part with any of them. I feel so nervous to-day, sir, I am not able to do my work properly. I wonder Mr. West was not at the coach, sir, to see him off; but perhaps he thinks he has coached him enough. He is a darling little man, that Mr. West; and how he loves you, to be sure, sir.”

“Do you really think so, Mrs. Croppitt?” asked Reckless, carelessly, for he was well assured of the fact.

“Think so, sir! who could doubt it? Much as he liked and respected Mr. Chayworth, he was not half so fond of him as he is of you. While you were away at Christmas, he was always talking about you. He told me one morning that you were the half of his soul, and that he would suffer the most horrible death to save your life. And I believed him, Mr. Reckless. There is a big heart and a fiery spirit in that little body, sir. The old gentleman himself would not daunt that little Mr. West.”

“That’s true, Mrs. Croppitt,” said Reckless.

“Yes; he proved that it was true; last long vacation, in August, before you came up. You have heard of it, of course?”

“No; what did he do?”

“Well, I will tell you, sir. But you must suffer me to take a little sherry, for I am rather overcome.”

“Pray do,” said Reckless, who by this time was sipping his hot tea and munching his anchovy toast. “You remember what I told you when I first came into these rooms, Mrs. Croppi’t?”

“Yes, sir; and I have never abused your confidence. When I have really wanted a glass of wine, I have always taken it.”

Having soothed her nervous system, which was truly

and honestly shaken by the departure of Chayworth, Mrs. Croppitt proceeded as follows:—

“Last long vacation, sir, several gentlemen, who were staying up, took it into their heads to play off all sorts of practical jokes, not only on the Dons, but the Undergraduates. One gentleman they frightened out of his wits, and he was obliged to go away, and the doctors think he will never recover his senses.”

“I never heard of that, Mrs. Croppitt.”

“But it is a fact, sir. They went to Massaroni’s, and bought a big figure of a woman’s face—they called it a ‘cast of Eve.’ The face was very big and very beautiful. They broke the figure, and made a mask of the face, and with a small chisel they took out the eyes, so that the wearer of it could see. Then one man put it on, and then got upon the shoulders of another man, a tall man, and over the both of them was thrown a tablecloth. This gave the appearance of a ghost about eight feet high. It had—this figure I mean—the most frightful appearance you can imagine, sir.”

“Did you see it?”

“Yes, sir, I attended on two of the gentlemen; but, of course, I said nothing about it when the trial came on, and they were all rusticated; for you see, sir, a bed-maker has no business to see or talk about all that goes on in the rooms of gentlemen. Well, sir, they went about frightening people out of their lives. Even the porters at the gate were in dreadful fear of this ghost, and for a whole week few gentlemen liked to go out of their rooms after dark.”

“Nonsense!”

“It is a fact, sir; and if you had seen it, even in the road daylight, you might have been frightened.”

“Well?”

"Well, sir; they frightened the gentleman I spoke of—and a fine tall, strong, stout gentleman he was—completely out of his senses; for they stopped him in the screens, and laid hands upon him gently. He roared out 'Murder! murder! murder!' and the whole College was pretty soon in an uproar. He was quite insensible when found; and Mr. Sudbury, the doctor, is of opinion that he will be insane for the rest of his life."

"Well; but what about West? Did they go to *him*?"

"I am coming to that, sir. Yes, they *did* pay a visit to Mr. West a few nights afterwards. He was reading in his rooms when they tapped at the door. 'Come in,' said he; and in they went and stood before him, the two of them as one spectral figure, eight feet high. 'If you are a man,' said Mr. West, 'I desire you to go; if you are a Spirit, I beg to say that I dislike Spirits, and you will oblige me by leaving me to my studies.' Instead of acting on this, they began to sing something about 'Black spirits and white, white spirits and grey;' whereupon the little gentleman sprang up from his chair, rushed to a corner of the room, grasped hold of a thick stick, and laid it into the ankles of the tall man, who dropt the man upon his shoulders, who, when he fell, broke the mask upon his face, which bruised him badly. And there was a scene, to be sure! The little Mr. West then trundled them out of his room and down the staircase before you could count ten, sir, throwing their gowns and table-cloth after them. I didn't hear this from the little gentleman himself; he never spoke of it. I heard it from the gentlemen who each acted a part of the great ghost. They said he was by far the bravest man in all Trinity College, and that, what was more, he had the strength of a demon."

"A what, Mrs. Croppitt?"

"A demon, sir. They said that, when his blood was up, he pushed them about as though they had been a pair of dwarfs and he a giant."

* * * * *

While the conversation above detailed was being held, little Mr. West was writing letters in his garret. The first was to his sister; the second to "the General," his friend and patron, who had done so much for him. He had scarcely finished, sealed, and directed these epistles, when Reckless knocked loudly at his outer door, and shouted out, "West! West! ho! West!"

The little man opened the door, and bade his friend enter.

"Why did you not come to see Chayworth off?" inquired Reckless.

"Because," replied West, "I took my farewell of him in his own rooms, and I had some business to settle."

"I hope I have not disturbed you?"

"No, dear Reckless, my business is completed."

"I wish you to go over to Bury with me."

"I will go anywhere with you. But what shall we do there?"

"I am going to take a part in a play."

"How? where? not on the boards?"

"Yes. I promised Mr. Smith, the manager of the Norwich Company, that I would play in a little piece written by our dramatic friend, and I intend to keep my word. He has written to me to-day, and says that the play is fixed for to-night."

"This will lead you into trouble, Reckless."

"I cannot help it. Will you come with me?"

"Yes; and I will take care of you while we are

absent. Ah! my dear Reckless, I shall yet be your senior officer."

"How? What do you mean

"That I will disclose to you when the proper time arrives."

At noon, off drove Reckless and West to Bury in a gig. Reckless was bored to find room for his long legs, while those of West scarcely touched the floor of the vehicle. Mr. Jordan, the livery-stable keeper, of immortal memory, had provided them with a very light, small, and compact conveyance, but a very tall, powerful, and swift-footed horse.

"We shall be rusticated for this affair," said West, when they were fairly on the road. "I have a presentiment that we shall be rusticated for this."

"Have you?"

"Yes; but I do not care."

"How's that, West?"

Here the little man informed his companion of what Chayworth had promised to do by way of advancing £500, the price of a commission.

"Hooray!" cried Reckless; "hooray! But £500 won't buy a commission in the Cavalry. My father told me that my commission and outfit would amount to something like £1000."

"Yes," said West; "and so I have reconciled myself to a Line regiment."

"I wish you would come out to India, West. By the way, I had a letter from Leonora this morning; she tells me that they are going to leave England much earlier than she expected; and, to tell you the truth, whether rusticated or not, I shall go home for short while about the middle of next month, and no,

return to the University. The dose that I have had of College life has been a small one, but it has done me an immense deal of good. I have learnt a great deal—not out of books, but from the men with whom I have associated. And so pleasantly has my time passed, that if it were not that I must go and stay for awhile near dear Leonora and my relations, I would certainly remain for at least a year longer. Brief as my career has been, I shall always look back to it with very agreeable feelings.”

“And I to mine, notwithstanding I have spent many a wretched hour within the walls of that old Court in which we keep. You said something about going to India?”

“And then ran on about Leonora and myself. Forgive me this egotism.”

“Of course, I forgive you. If you go to India—that is to say, if you join a regiment now quartered in that country—I will do the same.”

“Is that a compact?”

“Yes.”

“And before we leave England you will come to the Castle, and be introduced to all my people—father, mother, brothers, and sisters. Two of my sisters are very handsome girls, and I should not be at all surprised if you were to fall in love with one of them.”

“And sigh hopelessly for the remainder of my life?”

“Well, you have already told me that you would like to love as did Tasso and Petrarch. What were those lines you quoted?”

“Have you forgotten them already? They were these:—

Successful love may sate itself away;
The wretched only are the faithful!”

"I remember the others," said Reckless, gently urging on the horse.

Yes, Leonora! It will be our fate
To be entwined for ever—but too late!

They were now ascending a hill, at a very slow pace; the horse, held in, was walking. On the brow of the hill they met a man with one arm and only one eye. He was dressed in miserable garments, and his age was about sixty years. "For the love of God," he cried out, in a rich Milesian dialect,—“for the love of God and the honour of this country, give me a shilling, gentlemen.”

"Here you are, my man," said Reckless, putting his hand into his waistcoat pocket, and feeling for a shilling amongst the loose coin there deposited.

"Don't throw it to me, sir," said the man. "If you intend to give me a shilling, place it in my hand. It is true that I am a beggar; but I am a proud one, nevertheless."

"Then you must come to the top of the hill," said Reckless, "for I cannot pull up here. The horse will become restive."

•"Thank you, sir," said the beggar, following the gig.

"There is the shilling, my good man," said Reckless. "Now, what are you going to do with it?"

"Drink it, sir! And if you had asked me the question before you gave it to me, I would have answered you in the same words. I am not a drunkard; but on the anniversary of the battle in which I was maimed I always have a large drink, in memory of the day when I would have given this shilling—aye, or a sovereign, if I had it—for one small thimbleful of dirty water."

"Then you have been a soldier?" inquired West.

"God bless your soul, sir! I was in the 57th Foot, all through the Peninsula."

"And at Albuera?"

"If I was not at Albuera I could not have known Sir William Myers, and could not have helped to bury the awful lot of officers we lost there."

"You knew Sir William Myers?"

"Yes, sir. Perhaps you think I am an impostor; but I am not. When I say that I knew him, I knew him as the commander of a brigade—a brigade that staggered under him, and was going to retreat without orders to do so—for devil an order to retreat would *he* ever have given,—but he rallied 'em, and he swore at 'em; and he saved the honour of the country and the character of our troops, and only lived long enough to know that he had done so. A good many gallant ghosts went up to heaven to be judged on that day, but the most gallant of them was the ghost of Sir William. What a loss to the country that he should have died so young!"

"There is another shilling for you," said West, "for I am satisfied you are not an impostor; but I hope you will not drink *that*."

"Thank you, sir. Yes, I shall drink it; and that will be just enough. I will beg no more to-day from any man."

"Have you not been drinking already to-day?" said Reckless.

"Yes, sir, a little," replied the old soldier. "And why not, sir?" He then began to sing:—

If sadly thinking,
With spirits sinking,
Could, more than drinking,
My griefs compose,—

From care I'd borrow
 Some charm for sorrow,
 In hopes to-morrow
 Would end, would end my woes!

But, since in wailing
 'There's nought availing,
 And Death, unfailing,
 Will strike the blow,—
 Then, for that reason,
 And for a season,

Let us be merfy before, before we go!

"Suppose he should be an impostor, after all," said Reckless, as they drove on.

"Ah, no!" exclaimed West. "There was something about his speaking and his singing too enthusiastic for that. But even if he be an impostor, I do not grudge him the shilling I gave him, for he spoke some words which were very pleasing to my ears. Do you never feel, Reckless, gratified to hear the praises of those whom you have been taught to think of with respect?"

"Oh, dear, yes," said Reckless; "and if he had happened to know Leonora, and had praised her, I would have given him half-a-crown with the greatest pleasure imaginable."

* * * * *

Arrived at Bury, the two youths, after partaking of some refreshment at the hotel at which they put up, made their way to the theatre, where they found the manager and the whole of the *corps dramatique*. "You are to your time exactly, Mr. Reckless," said the manager; "and as soon as you please we will have a rehearsal."

"I am quite ready," said Reckless; "and so far as my part is concerned, I am what Parry calls 'letter perfect.'"

"Poor Parry!" exclaimed the manager. "When he could be kept sober, he played the grave-digger in *Hamlet* admirably; it was his great part."

"But did he not play the leading characters in Shakspeare's plays?"

"Never to my knowledge, sir; and he was with me for several years previous to his taking to painting. But come, and let me introduce you to the company, and especially to Miss Bangor, the heroine of the piece."

Miss Bangor was a very engaging actress, of some five-and-twenty years of age,—a very clever woman, of unblemished character, refined manners, and rather superior education; very lively without being pert, and very jocose without being flippant. After a brief while the rehearsal commenced. In the second scene with Miss Bangor, Reckless had to make a declaration of love, propose flight, &c.; and when the old uncle (Mr. Prantz had to play the part) came in, the young lady had to faint in her lover's arms, and Reckless (the lover) had to support her. The position being a rather novel and embarrassing one to the amateur, it required a good deal of practice to make him perfect in it. West could not help thinking that Reckless's obtuseness was studied and intentional; assumed, in fact, only to prolong the operation. Such, however, was not the case. The veritable boards were new to him; he had never before had to play with professional actors and actresses, but with ladies and gentlemen, who knew no more of the art than, or so much even, as himself.

"No, that will *not* do!" said Miss Bangor, in reply to Reckless's question. "When I enter in haste, as I *shall* enter, you must be standing there, not here. You must run to meet me, take me by both hands, and

give me an opportunity of *really* jumping with joy. Hold your arms and hands very firm, that I may spring as high as possible from the stage. There—so! This is what we call ‘the business.’ Now, tell me, have you ever been in love?”

“Oh, dear, yes; and am so still,” said Reckless.

“Well, suppose me that young lady with whom you are in love. How old is she?”

“Seventeen.”

“Just the age that I am supposed to be in this charming little piece. Now, if you were to see her coming at this moment from yonder wing, out of that copse, you would not stand here—would you? You would run to meet her; you would advance with outstretched arms, and exclaim, joyously, ‘My beloved——’—whatever her name is—would you not?”

“Most assuredly.”

“Well, let us try once more. Be natural, remember, perfectly natural;” and with these words Miss Bangor retired to the wing, and presently came bounding on the stage, exclaiming—

“Alfred!—dearest Alfred!”

“My own dear Leonora!” cried Reckless, meeting her, and lifting her from the boards; “come to my heart!”

“Admirable!” said Miss Bangor, laughing. “That will do very well; but, remember, I am not Leonora. I am, or rather the heroine of this piece is, Georgina. Now to the fainting part of the business. When my uncle (Mr. Prantz) comes on and discovers us in this position, I go off in a faint. My shriek on observing him, will be the cue for you to place your arms round my waist. Don’t hold me at such a distance as you did just now; but let my head rest gently on your

shoulder, just as you would suffer Leonora's to rest under similar circumstances. Now——"

"Are you ready?" said Mr. Prantz, from the wing.

"Yes," said Reckless and Miss Bangor.

"So, ho!" cried Prantz, entering on the stage.

Miss Bangor shrieked, and was falling backwards. Reckless caught her in his arms; her head rested on his shoulder, and there they were a *tableau vivant*.

"How will that do, Mr. Smith?" inquired Miss Bangor of the manager, without altering her position.

"Very good, indeed," was the manager's reply; "but bend over her a little more, Mr. Reckless, and don't keep your mouth open, please. It does not do to be *too* natural, you know."

* * * * *

When the evening came, and the curtain was about to be raised, Reckless felt a little nervous and fidgety; but after the first round of applause, he completely recovered his self-possession, and acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the manager and the audience. Miss Bangor—the pretty Miss Bangor—said many very complimentary things to him; and so did the author of the piece, who had taken a place in the pit, having West on his right hand, and another friend on his left. The house was well filled; and at the fall of the curtain, the principal characters were called for—"Alfred" and "Georgina!"

Reckless led Miss Bangor forth to receive the reiterated plaudits of the audience.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF GOING OVER TO BURY.

THE tuft-hunter, who, it may be remembered, insulted West, and provoked the wrath of Chayworth, happened to be at Bury ; and having accompanied a party to the theatre, he saw and recognised Reckless on the stage. He also saw West in the pit. He had never forgiven West for that dire offence of having had some one to protect him ; and on his return to the University, the tuft-hunter made certain inquiries, which resulted in his knowledge of the fact that both these young gentlemen, Reckless and West, had, while in *statu pupilarì*, been absent from the College and the precincts of the University without having filed an *exeat*—in other words, that they were “absent without leave.” He laid his information accordingly, and Reckless and West were both “convened ;” that is to say, they were required to attend the combination-room on a given day, to answer the charges that would be then and there preferred against them.

“What can they do with us ?” said Reckless, triumphantly, to Dacre, lighting his cigar with the summons.*

“They may expel you,” said Dacre.

“What do we care ? We are going into the army.”

“Not if they expel you.”

“Why not ?”

“Are you not aware that if you are expelled from either of the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, you can neither enter the army nor the navy, or become a barrister or a clergyman ?”

“No; I was not aware of that.”

“Then I would advise you to make your arrangements accordingly,” said Dacre. “There are several cases in point—cases that have occurred at this College; and in one case a son of a nobleman, who is now a marquis, could not get a commission. It is true that he had been charged with cheating at cards, and with ~~afterwards~~ brutally assaulting his victim, who accused him thereof. But what the offence, does not signify. The sentence of expulsion recorded against you, and transmitted, as it generally is, to the Horse Guards, the Admiralty, and the Inns of Court, is quite sufficient to place you in the awkward dilemma of not being received at any of these places.”

Without any further delay, Reckless wrote to his father a full, true, and particular account of his position, and West also wrote very urgently to “the General” and to Chayworth. Sir Charles and the General both paid a visit to the Horse Guards. They did *not* lose a moment; and on the very day that the two young gentlemen appeared in the combination-room they were gazetted:—

Edgar West, gent., to be Ensign.

Augustus Reckless, gent., to be Cornet.

And to set the heart of little Edgar West at ease, the old General sent him, in original, the following note from the Commander-in-Chief:—

DEAR ———, Mr. West’s commission has been signed by the Queen. It will be forwarded to you by this night’s post.—
Yours ever, ———.

Reckless also had a very satisfactory note from his mother, Lady Mary; it ran thus:—

MY DEAR AUGUSTUS,—You are always in trouble. Your commission as a Cornet in a regiment of Lancers serving in India

has just arrived. Yes. Pray bring your young friend, Mr. West, to visit us. The lovely Leonora dined at the Castle yesterday; she is the sweetest darling in the world.—Affectionately, M. L. R.

It was into the *anti-combination-room* (as it was called) that West and Reckless were shown by Mr. Rowe, the much-respected chapel clerk, on that eventful morning. Mr. Rowe upon this occasion wore his Sunday suit of black, and carried in his right hand a long white wand. Here they walked about, admiring the magnificent portraits of various Chancellors of the University. Meanwhile the Master and Senior Fellows were assembling in the adjoining room.

"They can't hang us, Rowe," said Reckless; "that's a comfort."

"No, sir," said Mr. Rowe; "but if I were you, I would be prepared to be sent away for a twelvemonth. It is rather a serious thing in their eyes, is play-acting, especially without permission. If you had done it up at the Barnwell Theatre, along with a company all gentlemen, it would have been bad enough; but to go and do it at Bury, along with real actors and actresses! they will look upon that as something awful."

"I shouldn't wonder. Well, and suppose they give me a twelvemonth, what do you suppose they will give Mr. West?"

"Give him? Why, the same, sir."

"*He* was not acting, Rowe."

"No; but he was abetting, sir."

"Betting! How do you mean betting?"

"You know what I mean, sir. He was there clapping his hands in the pit. Besides, you went away in the same gig; Jordan's men will be here to prove that; and many more gentlemen were there without leave, but

he who laid the information didn't think proper to give their names."

"I am very glad he did not," said little West; "and that Mr. Reckless and myself are the only two upon whom he has thought it necessary to wreak his vengeance."

"It is all spite, sir," said Mr. Rowe; "he has never forgotten that morning when Mr. Chayworth spoke to him so strongly, and reminded him that he was the son of a shoebblack; for, you see, everybody heard it, including his pupils—his noble pupils; and he, to my knowledge, had been giving out that he came of an aristocratic family in the north of England. If Mr. Chayworth had kicked him round the Court, but held his tongue while he did it, he would not have hurt him half so much as he did. '*Low-born, low-bred, son of a menial!*'" chuckled Mr. Rowe, repeating Chayworth's words; "it was that that went like a dagger to the very core of his heart, sir."

"And served him right!" said Reckless.

"I must leave you now, gentlemen," said Mr. Rowe, retiring, "and wait upon *them*—in the next room."

"I shall not depart in peace," said Reckless to West; "I'll kick up a row in the room, and frighten that fellow who has informed against us out of his wits. I will stand in the doorway when the business is over, and suffer no one to come out until I have had my say."

"Be calm, Reckless!" said West; "restrain that passion which I now see rising in your breast. Whatever you do or say, be calm! Remember that violent words or gestures are very undignified in a gentleman. Have your say, if you will; but be calm, cool, and collected. Remember, also, that the statutes are to the University what the Articles of War are to the army

of which we are now members; that we have offended against those statutes; and that if a penalty be not exacted for such an offence, there would be no such a thing as discipline, and without discipline——”

“Will you walk in, gentlemen, if you please?” said Mr. Rowe, entering the room with his wand, and a smile on his face. West and Reckless followed him.

On entering the room, in which was assembled the Master and the Seniors, as well as the Dean and the Junior Dean, the three Tutors, and the Under Tutors, besides “the informant” (as he was styled), and several other persons,—to wit, two grooms from Jordan’s, Rorcher, and Mrs. Croppitt (the latter were called to prove that the gentlemen had slept out of College on the night in question)—on entering the room, the undergraduates bowed respectfully to the court. A few only of their judges, however, took any notice of, or returned, this salute.

The proceedings were commenced by the Master asking the informant to make his statement, and this the informant did in a very lucid manner. Reckless and West were then asked, respectively, if they had any questions to put to the informant.

“None,” they both replied.

The Master then said to one of the grooms—“Are these the gentlemen who went away to Bury in the gig?”—to which the groom replied, “Well, they looks like ’em—the little ’un specially, and also specially the big ’un. But it wasn’t me as put the ’oss to; it were Jim, here. They were *in* the gig when I seed ’em; and when they came back, I was away fetching straw and oats from Maddingly. I would not take my Bibb oath that these be the same gentlemen, but they look very like ’em.”

"You are not upon your oath, man," said the Master. "Now speak—speak the truth."

"Well, in that case, I should say 'yes'—they *are* the gentlemen."

"Any questions to ask?" said the Master to the accused.

"None, sir," they both replied.

The other groom was then interrogated, and said, in a broad Yorkshire dialect, that so many gentlemen had been in the yard that day for horses, and gigs, and what not, he could not swear or speak to any of them; whereon the Master said, "Speak, fellow! or your master shall discharge you this very day."

"Nay, feyther," said the groom; "he wouldn't do tha't at before thinking twice on't."

"Know you, sirrah," said the Master, "that if we think proper, we can discommon Mr. Jordan, and drive him out of the town?"

"No, I did not know that," said the Yorkshireman; "and the greater the shame is it if you can. What! ye would visit the sins of the servant on his master? And ye are all parsons, are ye? A pretty notion you must have of religion, to think of doing such a thing as that. Now, then, as you say I am not on my oath, these are *not* the gentlemen, but quite different. I have nothing further to add, and must be off; for there's Mr. Bidgway, of Jesus College, expecting his 'oss, and I can't stop here any longer."

"That man has been tampered with," said the informant.

"So it seems," said the Master.

"What?" exclaimed Reckless; "do you——"

"Be calm!" said West to his friend, plucking him

by the gown. "Wait, Reckless, till your turn comes to speak."

Rorcher was then called, and stated the truth,—namely, that Mr. Reckless and Mr. West had been forty hours absent from their rooms, after leaving them on a certain morning. Mrs. Croppitt stated the same. And here the case for the prosecution closed.

"What have you to say in your defence, sir?" said the Master, addressing himself to West, the senior undergraduate of the two offenders.

"I have simply to say," meekly began the little man—

"Most potent, grave, and reverend Seniors,—

My very worthy and approved good Master!—

That I have been to Bury—it is true!

The very head and front of my offending

Hath this extent—no more. But——"

Here several of the Seniors, who hated "the informant" (for even the Dons of Cambridge can hate one another), broke out into laughter, whereupon the Master (of whose ear "the informant" had possession by toadying the poor old gentleman, and assuring him, as he did frequently, that his name as an author, to say nothing of being Master of the greatest College of the greatest University in the known world, would far outlive the name of his [the Master's] illustrious brother and poet,) became very angry, and said, in a frightfully authoritative voice, to West, "No buffoonery here, sir! no buffoonery here!"

"Do I look like a buffoon, sir?" asked West, surveying his diminutive proportions with a humour which even Mr. Keeley might have envied.

"Yes, sir," said the Master, looking very angrily at those Seniors and Dons who were still laughing. "Yes, sir; and your doom is fixed!"

‘In that case, sir,” continued West, “suffer me to remind you of what Don Quixote said to Sancho, when the latter was about to take charge of his government. And though you appear to have no respect for Shakespeare, it is possible that the genius of Cervantes may claim the passing tribute of your patience:—

“Do not, Sancho, if you should have occasion to condemn a poor wretch, revile him with hard words. The law prescribes a certain punishment, and you have no right to augment it by abusing the culprit you are called upon to sentence.”

“Go, sir!” cried the Master. “Go, sir. We have expelled you.”

“Not before you have heard me,” said West.

“Yes, sir!—Go, sir!—Instantly go, sir,” said the Master.

“I must be heard, sir,” said West.

“No, sir!” said the Master, vehemently. “You shall not be heard! Mr. Rowe!”

Reckless moved towards the door. He shut it—locked it—stood with his back upon it, and said:—

“No one shall enter this room, and no one shall leave it, till we have been heard!” And he threw down his cap, stript off his gown and his coat, and then bared his strong and sinewy arms as far as the elbow-joints.

“Be calm, Reckless!” said West. “Keep that post; hold it with your life; but be calm. We are outnumbered; but the wave must sweep over me before it can reach you. Be calm.”

The Master and Seniors rose simultaneously. Most of them became very pale and agitated.

“Sit down, gentlemen!” called out little West, in a voice unnaturally loud, considering his size; “sit down! I am now the master—of this situation. You must hear

me; you must hear the poor sizer, whom you would crush, and turn upon the world—to starve, perhaps. Sit down, gentlemen!”

“Sit down!” screamed Reckless. And, advancing to the table with great rapidity, he seized a heavy glass inkstand, and retreating with it to the door, again roared out, “Sit down! sit down!”

“Mr. Rowe!” the Master called out.

“If Mr. Rowe attempt to enter, or if any one attempt to go out, I will smash him,” cried Reckless, just as I smash this!” And he dashed the inkstand on the floor with such violence, that it was broken into a thousand pieces. An utter silence now prevailed. All eyes (save those of West) were directed towards the countenance of Reckless, which resembled that of a desperate bloodhound. His eyes glared savagely; his nostrils were distended; his fists were clenched; the blood swelled the blue veins of his white and powerful arms; and the saliva ran down the sides of his finely-chiselled chin.

“Gentlemen,” resumed little West, “I have but very little to say. It is only this—that I am going to leave you. I shall never return, except it be that, when covered with glory, I am prompted by a desire to revisit the garret in which I have spent so many happy and so many miserable hours. It is not improbable that you may then hail me as one who was once upon your foundation, and wish to decorate me with the degree of D.C.L. But if you do, I will reject your offer with disdain, because you are, for the most part, a parcel of inconsistent sycophants. You have recently decided that you cannot allow a place in the library for the bust of Lord Byron, because he was a bad man; and yet you have numberless busts of a man—a great man,

trifly—who propounded there was no harm in a judge receiving a present from a suitor in whose favour he had decided!”

“You are expelled this College, sir,” said the Master, looking at his watch.

“But I am not yet expelled this room, sir,” replied the little man, smiling blandly, and turning round to look at Reckless, who now stood with his bared arms folded, and heaving and snorting with rage. “At the present moment I command the College, sir. What a tremendous thing is blood! Why do you not turn us out of this room?”

One of the tutors—a very powerful man—rose, and was about to speak.

“Sit down, sir!” roared Reckless.

The mandate was obeyed.

“Be calm, Reckless,” said West, and then continued, quietly—“Gentlemen, I have only to add that I am now a soldier, and far beyond the reach of your authority. Whatever I may have done since I have had the honour to hold a commission in Her Majesty’s service, I am responsible for only to the Horse Guards, which may, if it think fit, try me by a general court-martial—a tribunal that does not decide before it has heard the evidence and the defence. I wish none of you any harm, God knows—not even ‘the informant,’ who fancied that with the departure of Mr. Chayworth departed my protection.”

“What may be your sentence upon *me*?” asked Reckless, sarcastically, impatiently, and perhaps insolently.

“We must consider that, sir,” said the Master, after conferring with the Dean. “You will—attend—perhaps—you will attend——”

“I will not attend again, sir. You had awarded, I fancy, some milder punishment for me than you have awarded to my friend here,—because he was a helpless youth, you thought, and because you know that my father is the patron of three livings. I know you well enough. You all hang together. My only surprise is that you did not overlook my offence entirely; and you would have done so if my little friend here had not been in my company, for I know the *animus* of ‘the informant,’ who had the audacity to insinuate that I had tampered with a witness—a groom—with a view to make him give false evidence. None but a base mind could have conceived a gentleman guilty of such base conduct. For that insult, deliberately offered to me, I shall inflict corporal punishment upon the informant on the first opportunity that presents itself. I will take both him and the law into my own hands at the same time, and I will cane him; and for that offence, if he thinks proper, he may report me to the Horse Guards, for that is the jurisdiction to which I am now chiefly amenable for my misdeeds. There is another point to which I must refer. The informant, in his statement, made use of the expression, ‘low actors and actresses.’ ‘He was astounded to find,’ he said, ‘a gentleman belonging to this College in the company of low actors and actresses.’ Now, although I think it a very unseemly and improper thing to remind any man who has risen to an eminent position of the meanness of his origin, nevertheless there are times when it would be equally improper to refrain from doing so. One of those times is the present, when a man who has sprung from the loins of a menial servant—a man whose father acquired the means of educating him by theft and by fraud—dares to speak of a body of poor and honest people

af 'low company,' and only because the stage happens to be their profession. 'Low company,' indeed! My father once told me if ever I met with a low fellow who prided himself, and presumed upon his wealth, or his learning, or his position, or whatever else, to fling our crest at him—

Fortuna non mutat genus.

It has a double meaning, I believe."

"It comes from Horace!" cried West. "Stay, Reckless! I will quote it:—

"Lupis et Agnis quanta sortito obtigit,
Tecum mihi discordia est,
Ibericis peruste funibus latus,
Et crura durâ compede.
Licet superbus ambules pecuniâ,
Fortuna non mutat genus.
Videsne, sacram metiente te Viam
Cum bis ter ulnarum togâ,
Ut hora vertat——"

While the little man was repeating the ode with great accuracy and emphasis, every one present (except Reckless) understanding its point and bearing, Reckless was putting on his coat and his gown—that short gown which did not reach to his knees. His passion had in some measure subsided, but his eyes still glared wildly, and his chest heaved heavily. As Byron graphically describes it in the *Shipwreck*—

The wind went down, but still the sea kept up.

"Mr. Reckless!" said the old Master (who, notwithstanding his prejudices, his loud responses in chapel, and his childish vanity, was a gentleman), "you and Mr. West have, it seems, entered the army, and are no longer subject to our jurisdiction. You are very much

excited, and perhaps you have some cause to be so. You and Mr. West had better take your departure from the University quietly. We will revoke the sentence of expulsion on Mr. West, as well as the sentence of rustication which we had imposed upon you. And if both or either of you should distinguish yourselves, or himself, in the service of your country, we shall be proud to think that you once belonged to us, notwithstanding your original transgression, and your subsequent conduct to-day. Will you suffer me to shake hands with you, and say 'Farewell'?"

"Not until you have withdrawn that insinuation, sir,—that I could be guilty of corrupting a servant's testimony."

"I do withdraw it," said the old Master, in a very kind tone of voice.

"And so do I," said the tuft-hunter, abjectly. "I did not for one moment intend to——"

"I wish for no explanation or apology from *you*, sir," said Reckless; "you, from whom the insinuation sprung, and was then endorsed by the Master. I can satisfy myself, so far as *you* are concerned, in one way only, and what that way is I have already stated. I will cane you."

"No, no, Mr. Reckless," said the Master; "we must have no violence. It is my intention to settle this unfortunate affair amicably, or at all events quietly."

"Yes, yes," responded several of the Seniors, in a conciliatory tone of voice. "It was wrong to suppose," one of them added, "that a gentleman of your breeding could possibly be guilty of asking a groom to speak a falsehood to screen him from the punishment of an offence."

"An offence," said Reckless, argumentatively, "to

which I would have pleaded guilty, had you put to me these simple questions—'Were you at Bury? and did you take a part in a play, upon a public stage, on a certain night? On your word and honour as a gentleman, we charge you to speak the truth'—I should have answered, 'Yes; it is all true.'"

"Reckless!" cried West, "you have spoken nobly; but you must now act nobly. You must promise the Master and the Seniors that you will depart the 'University without committing' any violence, unless it be in defence of your own person. Remember that your physical strength is greater than that of the informant, and that it would be—I won't say cowardly, but unseemly, for you to use those powerful arms of yours for the purpose you have proposed."

"Be it so," said Reckless, rather doggedly.

"Then all's well that ends well," said the Master.

"Yes, yes," responded several of the Seniors; "it is all over now." "Neither Mr. Reckless nor Mr. West is expelled; they merely withdraw." "We give them each a *bene decessit*." "Let us *Bury* the question entirely." (It was an inveterate punster who said this.) "You will be an awkward foe in the field, Mr. Reckless," said another. "For my part," quoth the great algebraist, twitching his coat collar, "I think him rather powerful even in a small room." (The great algebraist was Reckless's public tutor.)

"It must be dinner-time!" said the Master, smiling, and rising.

"Dinner-time, sir?" said West. "It is past five o'clock! The whole College is waiting to feed. The hall steps are crowded, and the screens are literally crammed."

And such was the case, reader.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO MISS WEST.

WHAT!—is *this* the school at which your sister is?" said Reckless, when West, shortly after their arrival in London, stopped before the door of a house in Park Lane.

"Yes."

"I wish I had known that before."

"Why?"

"Because I know the old ladies who keep it—know them well—have known them from my childhood. I will go in with you."

The footman who opened the door informed Mr. West that his sister *was* within; and in reply to Mr. Reckless's question as to whether the Misses Leardotte, or any of them, were visible, answered—"Yes, sir. Will you walk in, gentlemen?" Having shown them into a waiting-room on the ground floor, the footman took up their cards. One of the Miss Leardottes—(they were three elderly ladies, of very good birth, and had been very rich before the depreciation in value of West Indian property)—came down, and received both young gentlemen very graciously. Of West's good fortune in obtaining a commission, she had previously heard from his sister; but she was not aware that "Augustus," as she called him, had become a Cornet in a Lancer regiment. That was news to her.

Ere long, Miss West entered the room, and, hastening towards her brother, kissed him several times. She had not until this greeting was concluded, noticed the presence of Reckless, who remained standing, and waiting to be introduced to her.

"Mr. Reckless—Miss West," said Miss Leardotte. Miss West bowed, blushed, and said within herself, "I wish this interview had been more private;" for she felt that Reckless was inwardly smiling at the transport which he had just witnessed; and to say the truth, Edgar himself was a partner in her feeling.

It would be difficult to conceive two near relations so very unlike, in feature and person, as Edgar West and his sister Geraldine. She was rather tall for her age—eighteen—and womanly. She had large violet-coloured eyes, with long chestnut lashes; wavy golden hair, of luxuriant growth; and it seemed as if a sunbeam were always playing over it. Her forehead was not lofty, but rather broad, and compactly shapen; her nose was small and delicate; her complexion, what is termed transparent; her lips were perfectly crimson; and her beautiful teeth not pearly, but snow-white; her upper lip was somewhat curved. It was not a sneering expression that that upper lip gave to her face, but, nevertheless, it was decidedly sarcastic. Miss West could scarcely be called stout; but she was—if so homely a phrase may be permitted—"a finely-grown girl, and as straight as an arrow." In short, she was the image of her late mother, who was a Saxon lady—not one of the late Mr. Daniel O'Connell's "Saxons," but a lady born in Dresden, and educated in England, to which country her father had migrated when she was only a few years of age.

Many persons thought Miss West very beautiful. Many others, not enviously or ill-naturedly, but sincerely, "could not see it at all." The old General who had been so kind to Edgar, used to say she was magnificent; the old General who had been so kind to herself, thought her "not exactly plain, but far from good-

looking." The wife of the General who had been so kind to Edgar, also thought of her in the same terms; while the wife of the General who had been so kind to Miss West, used enthusiastically to declare that "even the glorious fancy and execution of Titian himself could not have embraced a being so beautiful." But whatever might be the differences of opinion touching her beauty, there could be none as to the quality of her mind. She had talents of the highest order, a fair amount of genius, and as great a power of *reasoning* as any woman can possibly possess. "After all, it could not have been much!" the cynical reader may exclaim; and if so, I would deferentially reply, "We will not argue that point." "Was she amiable?" it may be inquired. Yes, and high-minded. But she was not without her faults. She was very proud, and perhaps impetuous. Reckless would have admired Miss West exceedingly, but for two reasons. The first was, that he was in love with a girl who had large dark eyes and black hair; the second, that he was surprised that she, whom he had pictured to his mind as something very like his little friend, should be so very *unlike* him. He was disappointed when he beheld her beauty and her stateliness. He expected to see a fragile, sorrowful little being, upon whom he could expend a large amount of pity and sympathy. He found himself in the company of a girl who would, he felt, have patronized him had they been alone, and an opportunity of doing so afforded her. With all that gushing enthusiasm which belonged to his nature, and to his time of life, Reckless had been planning in his mind numberless little attentions which he would induce his mother to pay to the sister of his friend; and he was, perhaps, a little hurt to discover that there was a decided independence about Miss

West's appearance and character which placed her far beyond the pale of those little "favours" he had contemplated. None but those who have built up in the brain a castle full of kindnesses for some forlorn creature, and find that it was all a dream, can comprehend the sensations that stole over Reckless when he gazed on Miss West. Had it not been that Leonora had the entire possession of his heart, he would have loved the girl. Yes, reader, he would have loved her. I verily believe he would have loved her, simply because he was so immensely disappointed in her.

"And you are really going into the army, Augustus?" said Miss Julia Leardotte, to Reckless.

"Yes—or rather, I am *not* going into the army, for I am in it already. I have been gazetted for some days past."

"I never see the *Gazette*—or rather, I never read the appointments. But how strange that Lady Mary never mentioned the fact; and I had a long letter from her only the day before yesterday."

"Indeed?" said Reckless, scarcely able to take his eyes from Miss West.

"Yes; and she has invited Geraldine, your friend's sister, to spend a few days at the Castle, to meet her brother—Lady Mary says—so that arrangements of which I am in ignorance must have been in progress."

"I know of no arrangements," said Reckless, "beyond that my mother was aware Mr. West was about to accompany me to my home on the occasion of our leaving the University."

"Mary always *wished* to be explicit," said Miss Julia Leardotte, abstractedly; "but, somehow or other, she never could be." And then, awakening as it were, she said—"Oh, yes. The General—General Ferret—is to

take her as far as her own house, and thence he will forward her on in his carriage. She starts to-morrow afternoon, at four o'clock."

"I am charmed to hear it," said Reckless, bowing gracefully to Miss West.

The last words of this brief speech had scarcely escaped the lips of Reckless, when there was heard a loud, a *very* loud rapping at the door, and a ring at the bell which resounded through the whole house.

"That is the General himself!" exclaimed Miss Julia: and in another moment Lieut.-General Sir Edward Ferret, K.C.B., entered the sitting-room, into which he was (by Miss Julia's command to the footman) shown.

Let us describe the General—(it was not Edgar's patron, but Miss West's). He was a little man—short, and not stout. He had lost a hand in the wars—his left hand—and he carried his left arm as though it were in a sling; that is to say, the stump of his mutilated arm rested as nearly as possible over the region of his heart. The General—the truth must be told—was rather a mean-looking little man, in his old blue coat, black trousers, black waistcoat, white hat, and button boots. Indeed, if you had met him in Piccadilly, and had been asked to guess to what profession he belonged, you would have been puzzled, and might have been excused for thinking that he was a highly respectable grocer who had recently become a bankrupt, but had passed a satisfactory examination. But when you came to scan the General—to look at him as we always look at those men of whom we hear much, as heroes, statesmen, poets, &c.; in short, to look at him as Reckless did, you could see that he was not an ordinary man—a man of common stamp—but a man worthy of a great command. Nevertheless, he

had not the look of a man of great powers of mind. His silky grey hair fell over a low but broad and rather intellectual forehead; and he had a laughing, dancing, dauntless, and beautiful blue eye, in which seemed to lurk great humour, but great, firmness. The General stooped,—or rather he carried his head in advance of his body when he walked or stood,—and had a habit of tapping with his right hand the cuff of his coat-sleeve which concealed his wrist,—his “stump,” as he used himself to call it. His biographers, and some of the fashionable Army Lists, by the way, have it that he “lost an arm at the battle of Waterloo;” but the General never lost an opportunity of declaring emphatically, and rather petulantly at times, that he was “not at Waterloo until the business was all over,” and that he “never lost an arm in the whole course of his life.” At the time to which the narrative has reference, the General was a member of Parliament, and held a very important military office under the Government of Sir Robert Peel. The reader may with some reason, therefore, put the question—“Then why did he allow Miss West to remain at the school of the Misses Leardotte as an assistant governess?” The question may be answered satisfactorily. The General had a family of his own—several sons and several daughters. He had, moreover, no less than eleven young ladies and gentlemen, besides Miss West (all of them daughters or sons of old comrades), whom he had to provide for in some way or other. For several of the “charges” he was still paying the schooling. Miss West, even, was not quite off the General’s hands. He deemed it his duty (apart from the pleasure it afforded him) to call upon her periodically, and he never did so without contriving, in the most delicate way conceivable, to make

her some useful present; for instance, a dress, or a bonnet, or a shawl, or a book, or a parasol, or an umbrella, &c. &c.; and now and then he would bring her a basket of fruit and a bouquet of choice flowers. Those who knew not the many and various calls upon the General's purse (he never spoke of those calls), thought him a miser—one who loved money; but this estimate of the man was a very erroneous one. Those parsimonious ideas to which he often gave utterance, did not spring from an ungenerous source. What he saved he did not save for himself, but for those who really needed his assistance. For instance, while he was paying the Misses Leardotte a hundred guineas a year for the education of Miss West, he "knocked off" his establishment one horse and one groom, in order that his disbursements might be equally squared with his income at the end of each year. He walked more and he rode less during that period. In manner, the General was slightly abrupt; and if it had not been for those laughing, dancing, dauntless, good-tempered, good-natured blue eyes of his, he would have been an unprepossessing little man. As it was, no man or woman ever looked into his face without being pleased, excepting, of course, when he was angered, for in those moments he knitted his brows, and looked like a savage terrier. The General had another peculiarity,—he never praised or blamed ecstasically; and never, by any chance alluded to his own services, which had been very considerable and eminently valuable during the Peninsular War, as well as afterwards in the field of battle. At the Club to which he belonged, he was often, in his absence, talked about as "a toady of the Great Duke." But he was not a toady; he did not even toady in earlier life the General who had

selected him to serve upon the staff,—the General to whom he was originally indebted for his position in the world, and for the honourable and conspicuous notoriety into which he was brought long after his patron's uncoffined remains were mouldering in a grave dug in a foreign land.

"Well, Geraldine," said the General, kindly, after shaking Miss Julia Leardotte by the hand; "I have called to tell you that—what! is that Edgar? How do you, Edgar? You will be a very good boy, I hope—indeed, I am sure you will." And laying his right and only hand on the youth's head, he repeated the following lines with some feeling, but no enthusiasm:—

So, when returning from successive toils
Of heroes slain, he bears the reeking spoils,
Whole hosts shall hail him with deserv'd acclaim,
And say, 'This son transcends his father's fame!'

"My dear boy! I cannot tell you how glad I was to see your name in the *Gazette*. Edgar, you will be a good boy."

"Thank you, General," said Edgar. "May I venture, with Miss Leardotte's permission, to introduce to you my friend Mr. Reckless, who is also going into the army?"

"Very glad to make your acquaintance, sir," said the General, tapping his stump, and bowing to the tall and stalwart youth, who, out of pure deference to the distinguished little man, remained standing from the moment that he entered the room—"very glad to make your acquaintance, sir." And turning towards Miss Julia Leardotte and Miss West, he added—"Ladies, you must forgive me talking to these young gentlemen for a few minutes, for I may never have another opportunity. You are also going to the East, Mr. Reckless?"

At least if you are—and you must be—the Reckless who was gazetted to the — Lancers the other day?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Ah! Well, I’ll tell you all I know about the East, and that is only from hearsay. It is a tremendously hot country, and promotion is very rapid there. And I am told further, that it is quite as dangerous to be over-abstemious, as to run into the opposite extreme.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Reckless.

“You are very welcome to the information, sir,” said the General, tapping his stump; “but I feel that the gift is not a very great one, especially as it is divided between you and Edgar. And now, Geraldine,” (the General addressed himself to the young lady,) “what I wish to say to you is this:—At half-past three, and not at four, to-morrow, I will call for you; and I have to entreat that you will be quite ready, and not keep me waiting one moment, for I detest waiting.”

“Dear General, you may depend upon my being very punctual,” said Geraldine, vivaciously.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RECKLESSES DINE TOGETHER IN LONDON.

ON leaving Park Lane, Reckless hailed a cab, and told the driver to proceed to the Temple.

“I want to introduce you to my brothers, West,” he said, “and we will take the lawyer first. He is not a bad fellow, but awfully matter-of-fact.”

“But is not this a rather inconvenient hour to call upon a professional man? It is just three,” said the considerate West.

"Pooh! he is my brother!"

"Well, what of that? You told me that he was a barrister, who practised his profession."

"Stuff, West! He will be delighted to see us."

"Have you ever called upon him before in the day-time, or at this hour?"

"No; I have yet to find out where he keeps. It is in King's Bench Walk, and I know the number."

The cabman, having deposited his fare on the pavement, drove off.

"Jones!" "Dundas!" "Colley!" "Michaelson!" Reckless read off a long list of names. "Where the deuce is he? Oh, all right, West! Here he is!—follow me!" and Reckless ascended the staircase and was soon at his brother's door, at which he rapped very loudly. The Temple seldom hears so loud a rap as that of Reckless. The Attorney-General himself would not have been justified in making such a noise with a knocker in that King's Bench Walk. The clerk was rather frightened; and before he opened the door, looked in upon his master, who was reading the last of *Smith's Leading Cases*, and making notes in pencil on the margin of a brief, in a cause which had been set down for trial on the following morning. It was "a heavy demurrer."

"I am not at home to visitors, no matter who they may be," said the barrister to the clerk. "Professional persons I will see, of course; but that can hardly be a professional person. Stay! it may be Lady Mary. No—there is no carriage in the Walk. If it be Sir Charles—but it cannot be him—but if it be Sir Charles, say—Dear me! how provoking!"

"They are asleep, West; I'll wake them," said Reckless, "for we cannot stand here all day;" and

again he rapped at the knocker, a little longer and louder, if possible, than on the first occasion.

"I will open the door myself," said the barrister, rising from his chair; "some accident, perhaps." He mused anxiously as he left his apartment and walked through the narrow passage which led to the outer door.

"Hooray!" exclaimed Augustus Reckless, on observing his brother's face; "you *are* at home! Don't you keep a servant? I have been standing here for the last quarter of an hour. I want to introduce to you my friend, Mr. West."

"It would be a falsehood, sir," said the barrister, bowing to and smiling at West, "if I were to say I am glad to see you just now, for I am extremely busy, and endeavouring to conquer a great difficulty. But will you come in?"

"Thank you—no," said West.

"But *I* will," said Augustus. "I am thirsty, and want a glass of wine and water. You can go on with your work, Charley; I will not disturb you."

"You have already disturbed me," said the barrister. "You have put to flight the whole of the ideas I had collected. I shall be up half the night, and quite fatigued in the morning, when I ought to be as fresh as possible. You are very inconsiderate, Augustus. Mr. West, you will not think me rude for holding the door in my hand, in order that I may keep my boisterous brother out of my quiet chambers. We shall meet elsewhere, I believe, before many days have elapsed. If I were to let the boy in, he would light a cigar, perhaps, with some of my notes; and I have a consultation fixed for a quarter-past four."

"Nonsense, Charles!" cried Augustus. "Do give

me some wine and water. Let me have it at the door, if you wont suffer me to come in."

"No; this is not an hotel," said the barrister. "Where are you staying? At Long's?"

"Yes."

"Well, go there; you will get nothing here," said the barrister.

"Except incivility," said Augustus, good-temperedly.

"I would ask you to come in, sir, with all the pleasure in the world," said the barrister, addressing West; "but I cannot admit my brother—I know him too well."

"You are quite right, under the circumstances," said West. "I do not wish to aggravate his offence," he continued; "but he would not listen to remonstrance when he proposed calling on you at this hour."

"He is a sad boy, Mr. West. Good-bye, Augustus; go to Long's—get your sherry—and then call upon your medical brother and your clerical brother. Take the doctor at about half-past five, and drop in on the parson at a quarter to nine. Begone from this! Good day, Mr. West; we shall meet again before long"—and the barrister here closed the door very softly and gradually.

"That's a pretty fellow for a brother," said Reckless, when they had left the staircase. "When he comes down for a few days, to shoot or fish, he thinks nothing of walking off with my guns, and rods, and lines, and flies, or of appropriating to his own use anything that may belong to me, from a saddle and bridle down to socks and boots; and now that I call upon him in his chambers for the first, and certainly for the last, time in my life, he actually denies me a glass of sherry and water, and refers me to my hotel! Well, we will not despise his advice;—come along. Having refreshed

ourselves, we will just say 'how are you?' to the doctor, in Sackville Street."

"And the chances are that you will meet with the same reception from the doctor as you have met with from the lawyer, and for the same reason. His mind is bent upon his business—his avocation. Now, suppose, my dear Reckless, that you or I were very busy in sketching the plan of some great military operation, and some lay friend were to break in upon us, just as you broke in upon your brother, who was hard at work at the time, what would you say?"

"I have not the slightest idea what I should say," replied Reckless; "something appropriate, I have no doubt. But as for sketching military operations, my dear West, it is all nonsense. Take your troops out, and go to work. That will be my motto."

"Reckless!" exclaimed little West, disengaging himself from his friend's arm, thrusting his hands into his breeches pockets, and looking Reckless full in the face, "you are surely not serious?"

"Yes, I am," said Reckless, "quite serious; and I will tell you why—but not here; for, my dear West, we are now in the Strand, and if we stop to argue here, people will think we are quarrelling. Can't you walk and talk at the same time?"

"Not on serious subjects," returned West, again taking his friend's arm. "When thinking deeply, I must be quite still."

"That is not the case with me," said Reckless. "I can always form the best judgment when I am riding a horse at the very top of his speed, and when all around me is clatter, din, and uproar. But stay, West! By Heaven! that man immediately before us is the imbecile whom I saw in the room of Mrs. Coleby, and

that man upon whose arm he is leaning is Colonel Ornsbie—Leonora's father!"

"Well, and what of that?" said West.

"I cannot comprehend it," said Reckless.

"Comprehend what?"

"Nothing, nothing! But this mysteriousness perplexes me to the last degree. I will speak to the Colonel."

"You had better not."

"Why shouldn't I? I am 'a favourite of his—I know that. He will be very glad to see me."

"Not now, Reckless; he would wish you further. That man is thinking, plotting, planning. Like you, he is gifted in that particular. *He* can walk and think. That nervous shake of his head tells me that his mind is now bent upon something. If you speak to him at this moment, he will hate you; do not accost him."

"I tell you he is the father of Leonora, and I *must* speak to him;"—and with these words Reckless quickened his pace, and presently stood shoulder to shoulder with the Colonel. "How do you do, sir?" said Reckless, raising his hat, and then offering his hand.

"Oh! how do you do?" replied the Colonel, startled, and in an abstracted tone, and taking the hand of Reckless goldily and confusedly.

"I have left Cambridge, and have entered the army, sir; and I am returning to my home to-morrow," said Reckless.

"Oh! indeed?" said the Colonel.

"I hope they are all well at the Downs, sir?"

"The Downs? Oh, yes; they are all very well. Yes. Sir, I bid you good day,"—and shaking the hand

of Reckless without looking into his eyes, he crossed the street with the imbecile on his arm.

"I told you so," said West. "That man is very much annoyed at being accosted. He did not expect to meet any one whom he knew. I saw it in his features."

"But what can he be doing with that half-witted person, who has been advertised, and for whom a reward is offered by Mrs. Coleby and others?"

"That is *his* affair, I imagine. You do not want to apprehend the imbecile and claim the reward—do you?"

"Certainly not. But I wish he had been a little more civil to me."

* * * * *

Arrived at the hotel, Reckless slightly refreshed himself, and then dragged his friend to visit Dr. Reckless, in Sackville Street. This was the first time that Augustus had ever visited his medical brother in London. He thundered at the door, just as he had done at the door of the chambers in King's Bench Walk.

"Is Doctor Reckless within?" Augustus inquired of the liveried footman.

"Yes, sir; but he is engaged at this moment."

"Can I take any message, sir?" said the valet, who was always in the passage, slate and pencil in hand,

"Or will you walk into the waiting-room, and send up your card, sir?" asked the footman, observing that the gentleman was hesitating.

"Yes," said Reckless. "Tell the doctor that his brother, Mr. Augustus Reckless, has called upon him with a friend who is ill, and wishes for advice."

The valet having copied this message down *verbatim* on his slate, sent it up by the footman, who presently returned with the following reply:—"Doctor Reckless

will see you in a few minutes, gentlemen. Will you be seated, please?"

"Thank you; I prefer walking about," said Augustus, examining with excusable curiosity the furniture and the pictures in the reception-room, as it was styled.

"By-the-bye, West, you must give him his fee. Here you are—a sovereign and a shilling. That makes it business, you see. We shall have a right to ten minutes or a quarter of an hour of him."

"But there's nothing the matter with me, Reckless," said West.

"Never mind," said Reckless. "Say you feel ill, but can't explain exactly what is the matter. He most probably will tap you on the chest, ask you to put out your tongue, and so forth. I should like to see him at work. They say he is a very clever doctor—not that I could fancy it, simply because he happens to be my brother, I suppose. That is often the case, I believe."

"I will tell him what is the truth—that I feel very nervous to-day," said West, seriously.

In another moment the footman re-entered the room, and said—"Will you walk up, gentlemen?" They did so, and were shown into a very comfortable apartment, in which they found the doctor, who received his brother very graciously, but briefly; and then, in a very business-like and rather off-handed but bland manner, proceeded to interrogate West.

"Nervous?"

"Yes."

"Any pain?"

"None."

"Are you often nervous?"

"Now and then."

"After sitting up late, perhaps?"

"That is his case!" cried Augustus Reckless; "and it is mine also. We have just come up from Cambridge."

"And a number of your friends saw you off—no doubt?"

"Yes."

"Ah! well. I will prescribe for you both at once." The doctor rang the bell. .

"I shall take no medicine!" exclaimed Augustus.

"But you must, sir," said the doctor.

"I wont, I tell you."

"You shall."

The footman came into the room. The doctor spoke to him as follows:—

"Bring that decanter which contains the Madeira, and three glasses."

"Yes, sir."

"*I* feel rather nervous to-day," said the doctor to his visitors. "I was at an hospital till half-past two this morning. Both of you, like myself, require some gentle stimulant to keep you up till your usual bedtime—say eleven or twelve o'clock—and then you will enjoy a good night's rest, and rise to-morrow perfectly refreshed, and in good health and spirits. Don't look at your cigar-case, Augustus; I cannot allow you to smoke here. Not that I care about it on my own account, as you are aware; but the patients, you see—the patients! Strange as it may seem," continued the doctor, turning to West, "Augustus is the only one of my brothers who has ever entered this house, though both my brother at the bar and my brother in the church have occasionally left their cards. And

what is equally strange, I have never once entered into the rooms of either of them."

"Indeed?" said West.

"It is not for the want of brotherly love—far from it. It is, I fancy, that our respective occupations are so very different."

"Charles tells me," said Augustus, "that I shall be most likely to find the parson at home at about a quarter to nine. What prigs you professional men are, to be sure!"

"What! Have you seen Charles?"

"I have seen him, and that's all. He would not let me in, and refused me sherry and water point blank. Held the door in his hand, sir; and kept on saying—'Go! go!' But I will effect an entrance into those chambers some day—not alone, but with our younger brothers and sisters, sir."

There was a loud knock at the door.

"A patient," said the doctor. "Hush! I must receive him below."

The footman entered with a card.

"It is Charles himself!" cried the doctor. "How odd! Show Mr. Reckless up."

"That is the cause of my illness," said the lawyer, laughing, and pointing to Augustus. "He has given me a shock—shattered my nerves—terrified me out of my wits. I want you to prescribe something to soothe me. Dear Guss, I had a presentiment that you and Mr. West would be here; and as the consultation and the case is postponed, happily, I ran up—(what comfortable rooms you have, doctor!)—I ran up to ask you to take dinner with me at eight o'clock, in a private room at your own hotel; and I hope that Mr. West and the doctor will join us. And it is not improbable.

I may be able to get hold of the parson. I want to hear——”

There came another knock at the door—a rather meek knock.

“That *must* be a patient!” said the doctor, smiling.

The footman entered with a card.

“No! As I live!” exclaimed the doctor, “it is another brother. It is Bob. Show him up.” And presently, in walked the Reverend Robert Reckless—“A Perfect Parson,” as Augustus said, after contemplating him for several minutes. He then shouted—“Hooray! Hooray! Here are my brothers, all together, West! Law, Physic, and Divinity! Charley, you shall draw up my marriage settlement! Bob, you shall christen my firstborn! Jack, you shall prescribe for me whenever I feel nervous! Yes—we will all dine together! Let me, Charles, give the orders to Drake, the head-waiter.”

“By all means,” said the barrister.

The Reverend Robert Reckless had called upon his brother, the doctor, to ask him to visit and prescribe for a widow lady—one of his parishioners—who was too poor to pay for medical advice and attendance. It was a very intricate case, he said. The doctor consented, on the condition that the parson would accept the invitation of their elder brother—and this, the parson said he would be most happy to do.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WEST IS TAKEN TO RECKLESS CASTLE.—HIS RECEPTION THERE.—
ANOTHER CHARACTER APPEARS UPON THE BOARDS.

THE dinner was excellent,—so were the wines; the conversation was lively and spirited; and at eleven the lawyer, doctor, and parson retired to their respective homes; Augustus Reckless and Edgar West to their respective couches.

On the following morning they were on their way to the Castle, and arrived there at about two P.M. It was a noble, venerable pile of buildings, and had been built in the time of Henry the Seventh. The grounds were extremely beautiful and well laid out, and kept in excellent order, under the personal superintendence of Sir Charles. There were many legends connected with the old building—legends relating to Royal personages in days gone by; and to a stranger, Reckless Castle was a place of exceeding interest. The furniture, for the most part, was very ancient: some of it of even primitive construction. A room over an old gateway was assigned to West—a long, low room, at the end of which, when West took possession of it, blazed a large sea-coal fire. All the property that pertained to the little man he had brought with him. It consisted only of a portmanteau, a carpet-bag, and the military trunk which contained his dead father's uniform and accoutrements, &c., &c.; for after leaving Reckless Castle, it was West's intention to pay a visit to his patron, previous to joining the depôt of the regiment to which he had been gazetted.

Sir Charles and Lady Mary, who had heard so much

of West from Augustus during the last vacation, received the youth with great warmth of feeling; and the Misses Reckless, who, from their brother's account, had been prepossessed in his favour, made themselves as agreeable as possible, and vied with each other in giving him all the information he desired in connexion with the history of the Castle, and the particulars of the various legends therewith connected.

"And now, my dear boy," said Reckless to West, "since I am sure my people will take every care of you during my absence, I am about to have a short ride." And leaving West in the company of his sisters, Reckless went to the stables, ordered a horse, and galloped over to the Downs. It was nearly three o'clock in the afternoon when he arrived there, dismounted, gave his horse to a groom, entered the house, and inquired for Miss Ormsbie.

The hall was blocked up with camel-trunks, portmanteaus, desks, &c. &c.; while from every quarter of the premises there proceeded that noise which attends upon the nailing down of boxes. It was quite evident to Reckless that the house was about to be vacated by its present occupants. He was shown into the drawing-room, and speedily the lovely Leonora entered. She was pale and agitated. Closing the door after her, she flew to the outstretched arms of her lover, and rested her head upon his shoulder.

"In what have you offended my father, dear Augustus?" she asked.

"I have not offended him,—not that I am aware of. I saw him in town yesterday, and spoke a few words to him. But I could not have offended him. If I did, it was unintentional, and I will apologize. Has he returned?"

"No; and I am commanded to leave this, and proceed to town at once."

"Why?"

"I know not."

"Does he *say* that I offended him?"

"No, dearest Augustus; shall I show you his letter? Perhaps on reading it you may be able to explain it. But promise me that you will not take any notice of it; for, remember, if you did so, you would compromise me sadly."

"I do promise you, my own Leonora!"

"There is the letter;" and she placed it in his hands.

Reckless read as follows:—

"LEO.—Leave the Downs—come to London—travel post. I will meet you at 11.25 the day after to-morrow, Saturday, at Croydon. You will find me at that hour at "the Sparrows," an hotel, to which direct the post-boy to drive. Tell the steward to await my instructions. Curse that young Reckless! I thought he was at the University. I saw him in London to-day. Adieu. Your father, "P. L. O."

"My only offence, dear Leonora, was seeing and speaking kindly to your father. I saw him in the company of a man who is half-witted, if not entirely an idiot; an idiot for whom a reward is offered by his former servants, who now support him in the days of his poverty."

"An idiot?"

"Yes, Leonora, an idiot—a confirmed idiot. I saw him but once, but I recognised him instantly. I had his career from a bedmaker."

"His name? What is the name of the idiot?"

"That I know not. He is now called Mr. Brown; but I was told that was not his real name."

"I know nothing, dear Augustus, of my father's affairs, nor of ——" (She checked herself, and was silent.)

"Of what, Leonora?" asked Reckless, tenderly.

"Nothing," she replied. "Oh! how I wonder if it will ever be?"

"What?"

"That I shall be yours, or that you shall be mine?"

"Should that never happen, the fault will not be with me, Leonora."

"Do not say the fault."

"What other word shall I employ? See here, dearest. I have my commission in the army; and in addition to my pay, my father says he will allow me two hundred pounds a-year until I get my troop. We should not be rich; but the pay and the allowance would in any country keep us comfortably. My mother and my father love you, and approve of my affection for you."

"I am aware of that."

"Then fly with me. Let us be wedded at once! Let your father keep his riches. We want not—or, at least, *I* do not—any of them. Come, Leonora! Come! Fly with me!"

"No, Augustus. I still hold to the original conditions. Much as I love you, nothing upon earth would induce me to swerve from them. How often shall I repeat to you that little sentence, *YOU MUST SEE ME IN MY HOME IN THE EAST?* Will you come?"

"Come, Leonora? Come? If India were a thousand times as far distant as it is, and if I had to walk there barefooted, I would follow you. How can you ask me such a question, dear Leonora?" And again he

clasped her in his arms, and held her passionately to his heart.

"I had hoped, Leonora, to have seen much of you before our departure from this country," gasped Reckless.

"But it has been ordained otherwise," said she.

"What will be your address after you have left the Downs?"

"I know not."

"But you will inform me thereof?"

"Yes, dearest."

"Leonora! Again I implore you! Fly with me! or let me go to your father, and say to him——"

"No, Augustus, that cannot be! If my father were to consent to our union at this moment, and offer to endow me, as he would, probably, with ample wealth, I would not consent to be yours, except under the conditions I have named."

"Dear Leonora! will you not see my mother before you leave the Downs—perhaps for ever?"

"It is impossible. I must, and will, so long as I am unmarried, obey my father's commands. I was writing in haste to Lady Mary when you were announced. I think we shall leave England immediately."

"If so, I will follow you immediately. But why can we not be fellow-passengers?"

"No. That would be contrary to my wishes, and would interfere with my plans."

"But if we should miss each other in India, my own Leonora? If I should not be able to find you? If your father should die? If——"

"Fear not, Augustus. You will not be many hours in the land of the East ere I shall be informed of the fact. And if you cannot find me, believe me—and I

charge you to remember my words—I will find *you*, and at the earliest opportunity conduct you to my home, wherever it may happen to be.”

“Leonora, I am not a morbid or a silly lover, nor am I a curious fool; but these mysteries perplex me. I cannot fathom them.”

“Forget me, Augustus. Think no more of me—at least, not as the being whom you would wish to have for your wife. I do not say this to fret you, or to sharpen (if that be possible) your affection for me. I would not trifle with you for the whole world. But it were better,—for *my* sake rather than yours, perhaps, it were better.”

“You madden me, Leonora! Tell me, who was that idiot—that witless person, whom I saw with your father?”

“I was ignorant of his being until you spoke of him.”

“The fact of my having seen him with your father induced the latter to treat me so abruptly in the street, and to curse me, as he did in his letter to you.”

“That may be. I repeat to you that I have never heard of this witless person to whom you have alluded—have never seen him;—that I know nothing of my father’s affairs, or of his fam——” Again she checked herself, and said—“Augustus, for *my* sake, forget me!”

“Forget you! How often shall I laugh that idea to scorn? Forget you! Listen to me, Leonora,”—(and he held her to his bosom while he spoke)—“If hell itself yawned and gaped between us, I would make the struggle which would gain for me the victory—the victory—which enabled me to say, ‘Leonora, thou art my wife!’”

“Augustus, let this be our last meeting—our last meeting in England; and let us not correspond until

we meet in another land. If you desire it, I will inform you of the day of our departure; but beyond that——”

“My own Leonora! do I love thee?”

“Yes.”

“Art thou not beautiful?”

“You may yet see me with different eyes.”

“Never! Do not all that behold thee think thee beautiful?”

“Yes; and perhaps that is one reason why I mistrust you.”

“Mistrust me, Leonora?”

“Yes.”

“Think you that I would be jealous?”

“Oh, no; jealousy springs from doubt. If I thought you could doubt me—doubt my faith—there would be an end of my affection for you.”

“Dearest! art thou not gifted with sense, reason, and all the finer feelings that adorn womankind?”

“I am gifted, I know—I acknowledge it—and my heart beats honestly. And it is for these reasons also that I mistrust you.”

“Again that awful word?—Mistrust me?”

“Yes, I mistrust you. It is a very plain word, is it not? Augustus, I know man’s heart better than thou.”

“Do I not know my own heart, Leonora?”

“You know your own mind; but the mind and the heart are frequently at variance.”

“I had hoped to present to you to-morrow the little friend of whom I have spoken to you on several occasions. He is going with me to India.”

“Then the pleasure of receiving him is perhaps only a deferred one. All who are really and truly your

friends will be dear to me, Augustus; and all those who are your enemies—really your enemies—I could hate more bitterly than you could hate them—aye, even if my father were your enemy I would hate him. Strong as may be your feelings, mine, I think, are stronger—for love or for hatred;—not because I belong to what is called the weaker sex, but because I believe my nature to be of an extremely vehement character. There are times when I think I could be far from amiable. Indeed, the general current of my life has ran so smoothly, that my disposition has scarcely ever been tested. I have had unhappy hours, it is true—very unhappy hours, and days, and nights; but no positive unkindness has ever been shown to me, and I have experienced nothing to cross me—to arouse me to violent anger, or any such a feeling as resentment. I wonder sometimes what I should be like if I were seriously crossed.”

“Does not this sudden departure cross you—vex you?” inquired Reckless, mournfully, and betraying his own feelings.

“No. I regret it; but it does not anger me. Ah! ah! I have an illustration for a remark I made a brief while ago. It ruffles my mind, but it does not move my heart, because I am certain that in no way it affects my destiny, which hinges upon one point.”

“And what is that point?”

“Shall I tell you?”

“Yes, Leonora.”

“In one word?”

“Yes.”

“In one little word?”

“Yes, thou dark-eyed darling!”

"LOVE!—THY LOVE!"

"My own!——" (he was about to speak further, but Leonora interrupted him.)

"Augustus! if it should please Heaven that we should be united—if, as God grant it may be, that I am to become your wife, I will from the day of our union obey you in all things. But until that day—the day of our union—shall arrive, *you* must obey *me* in all things."

"I will!" said Augustus.

"Do not speak so solemnly, nor look so melancholy," said she. "Let us be rational in our love, and not as two young beings overcome by some passion, which is only violent because of the certain shortness of its duration. Will you obey me?"

"Yes, Leonora."

"Then leave me! Return to your home"—and she pressed firmly his hand. "Leave me, dearest! Our next meeting will be in India. Until then, mingle with the world, and with mankind and womankind; and if you should meet any woman whom you could love as much as you love me—any woman who could share with me your affections—I beg of you to consider that all my claims are forfeited,—and—marry her! I will not reproach you!"

"Leonora! on 'my knees—and let these tears bear witness to the truth of my words—I swear to you——"

"Hush! I will not hear you. You must not swear. I would not have you perjured."

"Perjured, Leonora?"

"Yes. Rise from your knees. You have given me your word that you will obey me; rise, Augustus."

He obeyed her, but reluctantly.

"May I accompany you to-morrow morning for

some distance on the road, if not to Croydon?" he asked.

"No; we must part here: and when we have parted, this room shall be closed—perhaps it may never be opened again. You do not know my father. His eccentricity often amounts to madness, or rather a quaint and quiet insanity."

"But he has bought the Downs, he says; and surely he will let the mansion?"

"How very English is that idea of yours! Let it? Let strangers—persons whom he knows not—inhabit it? He may let the lands, but the abode, you will find, will be untenanted—perhaps for ever."

"But thieves!—burglars! Leonora——"

"Would be more welcome here to what the mansion may contain, than those who would pay my father for the shelter and the comfort that these premises can afford. I have already told you that he is eccentric even to quiet insanity. How brightly the pebble in that ring shines to-day," she exclaimed, taking the little finger of Reckless's hand, upon which she had placed the ring. "That is a good omen, Augustus; it shines brighter by far than yonder sun, which only condescends just to look at Europe, and then retires to rest, as though the look alone had bored him and made him sleep. He gets up with us in the East, and we see almost too much of him. His energies of shining are spent before he reaches you in Europe."

"Dearest Leonora, why do you place even the sun between us?—Why speak of 'Us,' and 'You?'"

She replied not, but looked intently into his eyes.

There was a sound of carriage-wheels, and presently a knock at the inner door.

"Come in," said Leonora, in a gentle but rather loud voice.

The door was slowly opened, and into the room walked, or rather glided, a native of Hindoostan.

"Baboo!" exclaimed Leonora.

CHAPTER XIX.

IS A CONTINUATION OF THE LAST CHAPTER.—RECKLESS IS FURTHER PERPLEXED.

THE native of Hindoostan was dressed in half-Oriental, half-European costume. He wore patent-leather Wellington boots—dress boots—blue cloth trousers rather loosely fashioned, and a waistcoat of European shape. His upper garment (what we would call his coat) was of European cloth, but of an Asiatic cut; and over this was thrown, in graceful folds, a Cashmere shawl of very many colours, and of enormous price (five families in Cashmere had worked at it for three years). Upon his head he wore a turban, the cloth of which was of Cashmere manufacture, and of a pattern resembling that of his shawl. On his left hand was a lemon-coloured silk glove; his right hand was bare, and on the little finger was a silver ring holding a diamond of the size of a broad-bean.

This Asiatic gentleman was not more than fifty years of age, but he looked much older; his hair was grey, and his features—handsome features—thin, and rather haggard; his height was about five feet ten inches; his figure, rather slim and graceful; his complexion was not particularly fair, even for a native

of India, but he was not *black*, nevertheless. His eyes had a soft expression, but they were very penetrating when fixed upon any object. About his mouth there was constantly playing a smile, which now and then—against his will, as it were—relapsed into a sneer. His manners were gentle, courteous, and highly polished, but rather patronizing. He spoke English exceedingly well, and, from his discourse, it was very evident that he had associated a good deal with educated gentlemen—English gentlemen.

Advancing towards Leonora, he held out his left hand—the hand that was gloved. She seized it with warmth, and repeated her first exclamation—“Baboo!” And she added—“You here! you in England!”

“Yes,” was the reply. “I am here—why not?” And he began forthwith to twirl his grey moustache with the third finger and thumb of his right hand. This was a habit with him; he did it continually.

Leonora introduced Augustus to the Baboo. The Baboo bowed gravely, and then asked—“Where is the Colonel?”

“He is in London,” Leonora replied. “I am to meet him to-morrow at a place called Croydon.”

“In London? They told me I should find him here. I have travelled down in a post-chaise. You will see him to-morrow?”

“Yes; at half-past eleven, Baboo.”

“Baboo! Baboo, indeed!” said the Asiatic. “Do you not know that I am a prince?—Prince Zemindar! Yes; I am a prince. You do not read the newspapers?”

“No.”

“I thought not. Yes! I am a prince of Royal blood; so one great journalist says. I will take his picture

back to India, and show it to the Rajah of Burdwan ; and I will give him (that paper man) a great present—a beautiful time-piece. The Prince Zemindar ! Baboo, indeed !”—and the Asiatic laughed satirically for a brief while. Suddenly his eye caught sight of the ring on the finger of Augustus. Man of the world as was this Asiatic—long accustomed as he had been to deal with the craftiest race in existence—accomplished as he was in all the arts of dissimulation—skilled as he was in making his countenance no index of his thoughts, but the reverse—he was unable to conceal his emotion ; nor had he seemingly the power to remove his eyes from the bauble which glittered on the finger of Leonora’s stalwart lover.

“ You are going to be married, sir,” said the Baboo, addressing Augustus, and proffering him his right hand, which Augustus, somewhat embarrassed, took, and held in his own. “ You are going to be married, and I wish you much joy. I congratulate you on having won the heart of the most beautiful and gifted woman—except one (who only equalled—did not surpass her)—that was ever born in the East—I mean, of course, within the memory of man, sir. Many English gentlemen of birth, education, position, and of natural integrity, have yielded to temptation in the East, and have been corrupted ; and, when corrupted, have been bribed, and have returned to this country, to their home, with jewels of incalculable price, which they have sold either to London Jews or foreign monarchs. Russia has in its crown some of the diamonds, rubies, and emeralds which once reposed in a *ricketty* casket belonging to the Nawab of Oude. Not the casket out of which it was said was given other jewels of price to a gentleman who went by

the name of the Mad Ox. It would require something more than a *small* page to contain a list of those trifles which were received from a Nawab in the Madras Presidency by an English officer, who was subsequently supposed to be drowned in crossing a river. He drowned himself; but he was not drowned. Sir, the man who brought from India to England the best and the brightest jewel that the East ever contained—a jewel which he stole—yes, he stole—was the man who tested the character of his own honesty by his own conduct, and by the character of his accusations against others.”

“Prince, or Baboo,” said Augustus, blushing, “you speak in parables which are beyond my comprehension.”

“I speak of Sir Philip Francis,” said the Baboo. “I repeat, he was an honest man—an incorruptible man—but he was a thief. He stole the best and brightest jewel that the East ever contained. Yes—he stole it—a lady. You have not been in India?”

“Not yet, Baboo; but I hope to visit that country.”

“What do you want in India? The Koh-i-noor? You would never get it. It is in the fortress of Govindghur. Do not go to India. Why go to India? You are not poor?”

“Yes, I am, Baboo.”

“No; you are a rich man. The wind on the voyage makes a great noise. The water knocks the ship from one side to the other. The black waves fill your mind with the thoughts of death. Your stomach is deranged, and with your stomach your brain also. It is altogether bad. Felons only—not rich felons, but poor felons—ought to cross the sea.”

Augustus Reckless recognised in the Asiatic who thus addressed him, and still kept hold of his hand, a man of great ability, of great humour, of great power of sarcasm, great good nature, and one who had an immense insight into the human heart. Short as had been their acquaintance, and abrupt as it had been, he longed to be explicit with the Baboo; but having glanced at Leonora, he observed that her eye commanded him to be silent, and he obeyed the command.

"Do not go to India, sir," said the Baboo. "Take my advice. Who can wish it—who can wish that you should go to India?" (He glanced at Leonora.)

"*I do!*" said Leonora; and begging pardon of Augustus, she spoke rapidly and with great volubility some sentences in Hindoostance. When she had concluded, the Baboo shrugged his shoulders and replied in English—

"Very well; be it so. I will, on my word, if you desire it, swear like a good Hindoo, on all the waters of the Ganges, from Gungootree down the Sandheads, that——"

"Enough, Baboo!" said Leonora, rather imperiously.

"I was only going to swear," said the Baboo, meekly—and then, changing the theme, he said—"that I am very hungry; and as there are no Hindoos near, I should like a beefsteak and some champagne."

Leonora rang the bell; a servant came, and the order for the desired repast was at once given.

"Although I am not a prince, sir," said the Baboo, addressing Augustus, "I have had ancestors. Some few years ago—that is, say five or six hundred years ago—those ancestors had beef thrust down their throats. It disgraced them, and made their descendants outcasts. I take my revenge in these days on those who

in bygone times so wronged my ancestors. I eat beef—I like beef—and I swear by beef as strongly as I swear upon the Ganges' water."

"Then I fear," said Augustus, "that the oath you were about to take, whatever it might have been, you would not have considered binding?"

"Perhaps not; but then I have given her my word, which I never break, especially when I pledge it to a lady, and more especially if she is beautiful." Again his eyes wandered from Leonora, and stealthily settled on the ring, on the finger of Augustus. The nervousness of the expression of his face appeared to increase; his lips quivered slightly, and his hand trembled, while he twisted his moustache.

"The dinner is ready," said the footman, entering the room.

"The dinner!" exclaimed the Baboo, looking at Leonora. "You do not dine so early as this; and I do not wish to see dinner, only a beefsteak and some champagne,—and to feed all alone. You know my habit when I am hungry, and Heaven knows it is, very seldom that hunger visits me."

"Yes, Baboo," said Leonora; "you wish to dine in what you call 'dog fashion.' Now, if you will follow me, I will conduct you to the door of the dining-room, and there leave you. Come—follow me;" and she led him out of the drawing-room into the apartment where the refreshment was served.

"*Khao!*"—(eat)—said Leonora, pointing to the table, and smiling at the bare idea of uttering that word beneath an English roof to a man with whom she had always in India discoursed in English. "*Khao! khana khao!*"—(Eat! eat your dinner!)

"I do not wish the servant to remain," said the

Baboo, in Hindoostanee; "I will open the wine with my own hands when I require it."

"Yes, I fully understand you;—there, sit down! When you have satisfied your hunger, you will find me with my lover in the room we have just left." And with these words she closed the door, and returned to Augustus.

"Who is that extraordinary black fellow?" said he, when she entered the room.

"Do not speak of him as a black fellow; he is an Asiatic gentleman. He is not so fair as you are, but he is not unworthy of your acquaintance. He has very many good qualities, and few bad ones. He is a merchant, not a prince; he is wealthy, very wealthy; he is respected by all classes in India, Europeans, natives, and those of mixed blood. The rich and the influential court him, and he seeks out unsoliciting merit, and befriends and advances it. I have a very great regard for him."

"Is it possible that you can have a regard for a black person—an Asiatic?"

"Yes, a regard and a respect. Could you not regard and respect a black woman, if she were an honest, faithful, kind, and gentle being?"

"Yes; but that is a different question; men and women are so differently constituted. What did he mean by telling me I was a rich man? He fancies, possibly, that I am Sir Charles's eldest son."

"I do not wish to wound your vanity, dear Augustus, nor to depress your family pride; but I am quite certain the Baboo never heard of Sir Charles Reckless, or of Lady Mary, your mother."

Augustus blushed once more. He felt what is vulgarly, but forcibly, described as "extremely small."

"Tell me," said he, when he had partially recovered

his confusion; "explain to me, for it seemed to me so very odd, that a man of his good address, and seemingly large acquaintance with Europeans, should—should——" (he stammered).

"Should what, Augustus?"

"I could not help observing it—thinking of it. It irritates me."

"What?"

"Why did he offer to you, whom he seems to know so intimately,—why did he offer to you his left hand, gloved, and yet extend to me, a perfect stranger, his right hand *ungloved*? Was it because he wished me to notice that diamond ring upon his finger?"

Leonora had the greatest difficulty in preventing the smile which sat upon her beautiful lips from bursting into a loud laugh. Keeping her glorious eyes fixed upon Augustus, half-inquiringly, half-sarcastically, but very lovingly withal, she exclaimed, taking his hand in hers—"Oh! how very English art thou! Whether you wed me or not, come—come to India! It will do you good to see something of the world beyond the precincts of this little zemindaree, England."

"What is a zemindaree?"

"An Indian nobleman's estate. *In India*, I will tell you why the Baboo offered me his left hand to touch, and gave you his right hand."

"Can you not tell me now, Leonora?"

"No; it would hurt you, perhaps—though he intended no disrespect to *me*, no particular act of grace towards *you*. I wish you were less curious—at least for the present."

"Dear Leonora, may not the curiosity of a lover, when his curiosity pertains entirely to the object of his love, be pardoned?"

"I do pardon your curiosity, but I cannot now gratify it—or rather, I will not. I, too, am curious—very curious."

"I will gratify your curiosity on any point, if it be in my power. I will bare my very heart to you if you desire it, Leonora."

"You cannot—you cannot do so yet. Your eyes, not your tongue, must reveal to me what I desire so much to know."

"Look into my eyes. I swear to you——"

"'Tis as useless for me to look into your eyes, as it is for you to swear. Your eyes have not yet seen sufficient. England is not the world. So far as I am concerned, you are at present partially blind."

"When does your sable friend take his departure?"

"I know not. When it may please him. I shall not invite him to stay, or request him to depart."

"Then he is more favoured than I have been. Just before he made his appearance here, you told me to leave you, dear Leonora."

"This house is his. You are the master of my heart, but for awhile have stipulated to yield unto me the sovereignty thereof."

"I do not comprehend these Eastern figures of speech. You told me the Colonel had purchased the Downs—you showed me his letter. And now you tell me that the house belongs to your sable friend. How do you reconcile those statements?"

"The phrase I employed is not of Asiatic origin. The Portuguese carried it to India—to Hindoostan. It was liked by the people of that country, and it has become current there. It simply signifies that the Baboo has a welcome here as a *guest*."

"My God!" exclaimed Augustus, suddenly and pas-

sionately. "Look, Leonora! dear Leonora! The stone in my ring has become as black as a piece of coal!"

The door of the drawing-room opened, and the Baboo re-entered.

CHAPTER XX.

A CONTINUATION OF THE LAST CHAPTER.

"I HAVE feasted—I must depart!" said the Baboo to Leonora. Then, turning to Augustus, he said—"You are going, sir, to the East? We may meet there." Again his eyes wandered to the ring, and again his self-possession failed him.

"Is this a strong house?" he asked of Leonora, looking round him while he spoke.

"I think so," she replied. "My father has purchased it."

"Humph! How many laes? It seems a large place."

"I do not know what he gave for it."

"I will remain here to-night, for we are about to have a storm, which I should not like to be caught in. God help those who travel by sea, and are overtaken by it; and I do not envy those upon the land over whom it may sweep."

"There are no indications of a tempest in the sky," said Augustus, walking to the window. "The weather is beautifully fine."

"That may be," said the Baboo; "but before dark we shall have a tempest such as swept over Calcutta about seventeen years ago, sinking large ships at their anchors—tearing up huge trees by the roots—blowing

strong men and women, as well as children, into the river Hooghley, whose banks were strewed with countless wrecks of native vessels—overturning carriages and horses in the streets—unroofing houses, and shaking to their very foundations the largest of abodes. *You* do not remember it, Mootec;* you were then an infant."

"But I have heard of it," said Leonora.

"Such a tempest as was that we shall have this day, as soon as the sun goes down," said the Baboo. "Thunder, lightning, wind, and rain, and hail! Yes, I will remain here to-night; for I could not reach my hotel in London before the sun has gone down."

"I think you are mistaken as to the weather," said Augustus, wishing the Baboo to depart.

"You are but a young man, sir; but you are old enough to gamble. What will you stake? Come! I will give you odds. I will stake this stone—this bright stone"—(he took off his ring)—"against that piece of coal (is it not coal?) that is set in the ring upon your finger. Come! black for white! or white for black!"

"I would not part with this ring, Baboo, for all the diamonds, rubies, and emeralds which have been brought, you say (and I believe you), from the East by corrupt officials."

"That ring is now worth nothing—not eight annas—one shilling."

"That may be; but I value it for the sake of the donor. And, if it be not sinful to paraphrase the words of our great poet, I desire to tell you, Baboo, that—

If heaven would make me such another world
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,
I would not sell this ring for 't."

* "Mootec," in Hindoostanee, signifies "Pearl." It is, however, a pet name, or nickname, when applied to the children of Christians.

"Bah!" said the Baboo, twirling his moustache; "that was the silly sentiment of a black fellow. I saw the play on the boards of the Chowringhee Theatre, in Calcutta. All the natives thought it was a burlesque—a mad khidmutghar (table-servant) making love to an English lady, who was mad enough to listen to him. But see! the sky is now overcast. And listen! listen to the distant thunder."

Reckless's eyes were now riveted on Leonora. He was embarrassed. He could not take leave of her in the presence of the Baboo, and he could not ask permission to remain any longer without making another request,—namely, that a servant might be sent to the Castle to inform Lady Mary that she need not feel any uneasiness on his account. Leonora read his thoughts. She touched the bell. A servant entered.

"Tell a groom to saddle my horse—the grey horse—and bring him to the door." The servant disappeared.

"Are you going to ride?" asked the Baboo, quietly.

"No; although I have ridden through worse storms than any ever seen in this country. It is not a land for storms," said Leonora.

"No; because the bad weather is spread over the whole year, I believe," said the Baboo, twirling away at his moustache as usual, and speaking rather slowly, as he always spoke, in a peculiarly quiet and quaint tone of voice.

"I was writing a letter to Lady Mary Reckless," said Leonora to Augustus; "I must now hasten to the library, and having finished it, forward it by the groom. I will add a ~~postscript~~ ^{postscript}, to say that you are in shelter at the Downs."

"Thanks," said Augustus, immensely relieved and delighted.

Leonora left the room. The Baboo was now alone with Reckless in the drawing-room:

Louder and louder pealed the thunder. The Baboo moved towards one of the front windows, and looked out upon the lawn. Reckless walked to another window and looked out.

The groom led the steed to the door.

"Ah! ah! my old friend!" exclaimed the Baboo, on beholding the horse. "Is that you? I did not know that you were in England. What a strange man is the Colonel!"

"That is an Arab horse, I am told," said Augustus. "He is a remarkably beautiful animal."

"Yes, he is an Arab; and any horse that wins so much money as he has won must be beautiful. He is, or was, a very famous race-horse in India."

"He has won much money?"

"Well, yes; to my knowledge, he won for his owner, on one 12th of January, two lacs—£20,000."

"Did the Colonel own him?"

"Yes."

"I was not aware that the Colonel was a sporting man."

"No? He was a sporting man till he grew tired of it, and he was very successful on the turf. At last, it was not exciting enough for him. Yes; that is the famous *Ackbar*, who galloped his mile in one minute and forty-two seconds, with a heavier man than that man on his back."

"He does not give me the idea of a horse of any speed—he is so sluggish in his movements."

"Ah! you should never judge by appearances," said the Baboo. "As the Persian poet very truly says, 'Who, to look at the shahma (an Indian bird), would

suppose that he could sing so sweetly? Who, to look at the flamingo, would suppose his note so hideous? Who, to look at the painted skin of the adder, would fancy that he was more dangerous than the eel?"

"Our great poet, whom I have already quoted," said Augustus—"not that you must think me a very learned person because I quote; for, to tell you the truth, I only remember those things that I hear upon the stage or elsewhere, and which strike me as very good—I don't read them up;—but our great poet makes one of his characters (Petruchio) say to another character (Catherine)—

What! Is the jay more precious than the lark,
Because his feathers are more beautiful?
Or is the adder better than the eel,
Because his painted skin contents the eye?"

"Humph!" said the Baboo, smiling, and approaching Augustus. "What of that? Your great poet has treated the idea just as you treat the commodity of tea, and that of coffee, which you sweeten with sugar and colour with milk, just to suit the European palate and prejudice. All great poets must borrow from the great poets who preceded them. Admiration leads to imitation. I am now uttering the sentiments and quoting the words of a writer who lived and died before Europe was invented or born." And then darting off at a tangent, the Baboo, laying his hand upon the wrist of Augustus, continued—"I like you very much: you are an honest man—a good man—and therefore I advise you, *Do not go to India! Marry her——*"

The door opened, and Leonora entered. Reckless was looking very intently at the Baboo, and listening with a greedy ear for the speech he was about to deliver; but, on the return of Leonora, the Baboo was silent.

A very strange feeling crept over Reckless. He had not been in the company of, or had he discoursed with, this Asiatic gentleman for more than an hour, and yet it seemed as though he had known him for years, and not only had known him, but had respected him. The Baboo had, in fact, won Reckless's heart; and he won it without the least effort—without any particular desire to do so. Large drops of rain now began to fall, and presently it hailed terrifically. The noise was so great, it was almost impossible to converse; the thunder, too, was very loud, and the forked lightning vivid in the extreme.

"Are you not alarmed in such a tempest as this?" Reckless asked of Leonora, taking her hand.

"No," she replied; "partly because I have been accustomed to witness such tempests, and partly because some guardian spirit bids me not to fear God's will upon earth, whatever it may be."

"She is a Fatalist, my good sir," said the Baboo, taking from his pocket a small silver box containing spices; "she believes in her destiny. Do you not, Mootee?"

"Yes," said Leonora.

"And so do I," said the Baboo. "But at this present moment I believe in sleep. That couch in the dining-room gave me a very polite invitation just now, and I am going to accept it."

"The house is yours, Baboo," said Leonora.

"I wish you would say 'Prince,' said the Baboo, laughingly; "I rather like that title."

"Well, Prince, you know that you are the king of this abode. Do as you please."

"Then, fair lady, I command you to make yourself as agreeable as possible to your lover. Sir, I recom-

mend you to keep up a very good fire—for now that it has left off pouring down the hailstones, it will begin to blow a very cold wind.”

The Baboo left the room, and Reckless and Leonora were once more alone together.

“The elements have been very kind to me,” Reckless began. “Dear Leonora! they have detained me here after you wished me to depart.”

“They have also been very kind to me,” she replied. “They have proved to me, by detaining you here, and giving you an opportunity of talking to the Baboo, that a man’s colour will not interfere with your respect and regard for him.”

“I *love* that man!” exclaimed Augustus, vehemently. “I would lay down my life for him. If he were dying of the most malignant and contagious disease—the disease of which I have the greatest horror—the small-pox—I would sit by his bedside, and minister to his wants. Is he married? Has he any family?”

“He has several wives and several children.”

CHAPTER XXI.

A SHORT ONE.

It was at midnight that Reckless took leave of Leonora. The parting was a very painful one. Both shed tears.

In all directions, on the road to the Castle, Reckless might have seen the ravages which had been committed by the storm. Huge trees had been blown down, and

the highway was intersected by rivulets, and dotted over with ruts formed by the hail and the rain. But of these things he took but little notice. The family and the guests at Reckless Castle (including Miss West, who had arrived just before the storm began) had retired to rest. Reckless was glad of this. He stole away quietly to his room, and threw himself upon his couch; but he could not sleep; he did not even make the attempt. Ever and anon he arose, and paced his apartment, thinking of the occurrences of the past day. The meeting with the Baboo, whom he left slumbering on the couch of the dining-room at the Downs, appeared to him more like a dream than a reality. Suddenly there was engendered in the mind of Reckless a thought which made him extremely unhappy. The Baboo, he fancied, loved Leonora! "But no," he reasoned, "that cannot be; for he said, 'Marry her; but do not go to India.' Still (Reckless went on reasoning upon visionary premises), might not that have been artfulness—Asiatic artfulness?" And then he began to soliloquise after the following fashion:—

"What! to have for a rival in the affections of that girl a black fellow! Yes, a black fellow, after all!—a black merchant! And how do I know that she may not already be his wife? That is the great secret, perhaps! He has several wives, she said. How do I know that she is not one of them? And yet—oh, Heaven! Forgive me, dearest Leonora, for harbouring for one second such a hideous thought of thee. But why—why?—What do I care about wealth? We should have a competency. Oh, wherefore impose these conditions? What can be the meaning of the Colonel cursing me for seeing him with that half-witted man?

That is a mystery in itself. And why should he order Leonora to leave the Downs in such haste, and meet him at a small hotel, at which he cannot be going to stay? I should very much like to know the real name of Mr. Brown. I will write to Mrs. Coleby; she will give it to me."

And with a view to set his mind at rest on this one point, Reckless did write a letter to Mrs. Croppitt, and begged of her to procure for him the desired information. Having directed and sealed the epistle, he resumed his soliloquy.

"Yes, yes; that black fellow loves her! No, that cannot be. It *may* be. He looked at her very tenderly several times. I will strangle my love for her! In the society of West's sister, I will endeavour to forget her, and I *will* forget her. But *how* can I forget her? Forget those eyes, and that gentle voice of hers? Forget her! No, my own Leonora! I will never forget thee—never cease to love thee! Good Heaven! the stone of this ring is now as yellow as a piece of gold. Ah! why did that black fellow's eyes glare so when he saw this ring on my finger? Perhaps it was a gift from him to Leonora. If I knew that for certain, I would throw it into the fire. Mysterious bauble! can *you* not divulge to me the secret that is gnawing at my very soul? *Why* must I visit the East? *Why* must I see her in another land?"

While Reckless was thus tormenting himself, Leonora was preparing for her journey to town. The Baboo had left the Downs as soon as the day had dawned.

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It was a dull journey for Leonora—from the Downs to Croydon—and more than once she regretted that

she had not accepted Reckless's offer, and suffered him to escort her the greater part of the distance. Her mind, like that of her lover, was not a little disturbed. She, too, was racked by curiosity—curiosity which could not at present, or for months to come, by any possibility be gratified. The half-witted person of whom Reckless had spoken, once occurred to her. She asked herself a question as to whom he could be; why a reward should be offered for him by his former servants; and why he should be seen in her father's company. But the great question which reigned paramount in her brain—the question, “Will that man, whom I love so devotedly, make me his wife?”—speedily returned, and put all minor questions to flight.

It was long past twelve when Leonora arrived at the little hotel. The Colonel was standing at the door—watch in hand.

“You are late,” said the Colonel, assisting his daughter to alight from the carriage.

“The roads were so heavy, that ——” Leonora was about to give a reason, when the Colonel interrupted her—

“Of course the roads are heavy after such a storm; but you should have calculated on the state of the roads, and have left the Downs half an hour earlier. But, never mind. Listen to me, child!” (He murmured softly, but hurriedly, in her ear). “I am about to introduce to you, or rather to recommend to your care and kindness, a gentleman, whom you must humour. He is not a madman; nor is he a person by any means disagreeable in his manners. He has been a man of some ability; but his intellects are now very weak. Keep him as much as possible in your sight, and in your company; and whenever he wishes to go out of

the house in London—the house that I have rented—see that he is accompanied, or followed, by a man called Martin, whom you will see in London—a man whom I have engaged to look after this gentleman.”

“I will do as you request, papa; but *who* is he?”

“He is a distant connexion of mine.”

“And his name?”

“His name is of no consequence. But address him as Mr. Brown; and now and then say ‘Uncle Brown.’”

“Is he my uncle?”

“Leonora, you know how I hate to be questioned. Do as I bid you.”

“I will, papa.”

The Colonel then led his daughter into the room which he had engaged; and said to Mr. Brown (we must call him Mr. Brown, reader), who was standing with his back to the fire, “Edmund, this is my daughter.”

Mr. Brown made a very low and graceful bow, and shook cordially the hand which Leonora (in obedience to her father’s instructions, given previously to entering the room) extended towards this new acquaintance.

Mr. Brown’s garments were no longer threadbare and shabby. A Bond-street tailor had been at work upon him; and St. James’s-street had been once more the locality whence came his hat and his boots. He was, in fact, remarkably well dressed, and might have been taken for a lieutenant-general in the army if he had been seen on the steps of the Senior United Service Club—*malgré* his purple complexion and battered features.

After remaining a brief while at the hotel, the party, consisting of Colonel Ornsbie, Leonora, and Mr. Brown, journeyed to London, and proceeded to a house which the Colonel had rented, in Davies-street, Berkeley-

square. Here Mr. Martin, Mr. Brown's attendant, was presented to Leonora, who' (so the Colonel emphatically informed Mr. Martin, in his daughter's presence) was the sole mistress of the abode.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LOVERS' WALK.

"BE a philosopher, my dear Reckless; or, at all events, love philosophically. If it eases your heart, however, to pour forth your strain of troubles and miseries, by all means do so. But you must not expect me to take the same interest in the matter as you take yourself," said West, when his friend came into his room, sat down upon his bed, and began to mourn the departure of his Leonora. It was on the morning of the day that the lady left the Downs, that West gave his friend such good advice. "Love philosophically"—a piece of advice that Lady Mary, his mother, repeated to him a few hours afterwards; but it is not so easy for a man circumstanced as was Reckless, to listen to such advice. He loved, and was beloved—aye, was accepted on certain conditions, which he was ready to perform. But here was the object of his affections away from him, and he in ignorance of her address. He tried very hard to banish Leonora—temporarily banish her—from his thoughts, and made several attempts to pay Miss West a great deal of attention. He now admired Miss West extremely; and the more he saw of her, the more he admired her. It would have been, he felt, an immense relief to his heart if he could have flirted with

her; but that organ just then was so full, it had but little room for that amount of love—let us call it love—which is required to bring about a flirtation of the character demanded as a cure for Reckless's case; not a cure for his love, but a soothing sedative to allay its violence. When a man cannot sleep, he usually takes an opiate; and when a lover is raving about his absent mistress, there is nothing so soothing as the society of a handsome and intellectual woman.

"Have you seen the Lovers' Walk, Miss West?" said Reckless, rather abruptly, but kindly. They had just taken lunch, and were in the drawing-room at the time. The Lady Mary, her daughters, several of her younger sons, and little West, were also present. The last-named person was explaining to Miss Reckless the reason why cavalry, except by accident, could not penetrate or "break" a square of infantry; and in his enthusiasm, he was illustrating his explanation by going down upon one knee and holding an imaginary firelock at the required elevation. Miss Reckless was listening with great attention, and so was Lady Mary; while the younger branches of the family, fancying that little West was playing some funny trick to amuse their elder sister, laughed very loudly, and clapped their hands. Miss West had heard so much about squares, and squadrons, and battalions, and regiments, and companies, and divisions, and all that pertains to an army in the field or in quarters, that she was tired of the subject, and did not listen to her brother, or look at his gesticulations, but kept on knitting.

"What Lovers' Walk?" Miss West inquired, in reply to the question of Reckless.

"The Lovers' Walk in the wood on the other side of the shrubbery; about a quarter of a mile from this."

"No, I have not been there."

"Then come and look at it."

Miss West put down her work, arose, accepted the arm which Reckless offered her, and left the room. In the hall she tied on her bonnet, suffered her companion to cloak her, and was led away to the Walk, which was one of the "lions" of the Castle. It was an avenue of old oak trees, covered with ivy. The oaks were dead. It was supposed that they were five hundred years old. None of them could fall, because the ivy chained the one tree to the other. It was, in short, a dense forest of ivy, supported involuntarily by the trees of ancient times. In summer, it was a very agreeable retreat; but in the month of March, it was too cold to be enjoyed—only as a curiosity. On their way to the Walk, they encountered Sir Charles; but beyond taking off his hat, and bowing and smiling to Miss West, he took no further notice of them—that is to say, he did not stop to enter into conversation. Sir Charles, perhaps, was too busy thinking about the damage that the late storm had done on the estate, and how it could be most speedily repaired; or it may have been that Sir Charles said to himself, "Oh! here's Augustus paired off with that glorious golden-haired girl, to whom I love to talk; but I won't disturb him,—for although his first affair wears a rather determined and serious aspect, there is no reason why he should not enjoy the conversation of other beautiful women" (Sir Charles was a very kind-hearted man in these as well as in other matters). He, as well as Lady Mary, thought Miss West remarkably beautiful; and, as a blonde, quite as attractive as was Miss Ormsbie as a dark-eyed and dark-haired beauty. In so

far as the opinion of Sir Charles and Lady Mary were concerned, they could hardly decide which, in point of beauty, had the preference; while in mental gifts they thought the two girls were nearly equal. In education and accomplishments, Miss West was very far in advance of Leonora; but then, there was an originality—a peculiarity about the latter, which impressed her very strongly on the memory of those with whom she became acquainted.

Arrived at the Lovers' Walk, Reckless endeavoured to deliver himself of some romantic and gallant speeches; but how miserably he succeeded may be gleaned from the fact, that they inspired Miss West with ridicule rather than sentiment. And feeling duly sensible of his position, Reckless tried to be jocose, and would have given half the world if he could have made Miss West his confidante, and have asked her advice. Reckless was one of those beings who was constantly asking his friends for advice, though he rarely or never made any use of it after he had received it. The great point upon which he wished to be advised just then, was this—whether he would be justified, or whether it would be prudent upon his part, to find out the address of his lady-love, and seek another interview with her. It was one of those matters, he thought, where the opinion of a young and clever girl would be of far more value than the opinion of any one else. He therefore, after a little awkward hesitation (which betrayed that “the very dear friend” whom he represented in a difficulty was no other than himself), proceeded to state a case (his own), to which Miss West listened with a good deal of matter-of-fact attention and some interest, for she

was really desirous of giving him ("in strict confidence," to use Reckless's own expression) the best opinion she was capable of forming.

"Now, remember," Reckless concluded, or rather summed up his case—"the lady is very positive, if not very capricious."

"And the gentleman?" said Miss West, affecting not to know that Reckless himself was his "friend," and the hero of his own story.

"Well, the gentleman," he replied, "is not a fool, but he is awfully in love—to tell you the truth, he is *desperately* in love—bordering on insanity, as it were."

"In that case, it would be ridiculous to offer him advice, for he would not attend to it."

"He might, perhaps. Now, what would you say? Would you seek her out or not?"

"You have asked me to judge from my own feelings—to place myself in the position of the lady?"

"Yes."

"And that your friend has promised her that he will see her no more until certain events have come to pass?"

"Yes; he has promised that."

"Then I would advise him to keep his promises, if he expects her to do the like."

"But that answer is so vague as well as so brief. Do you think that such a girl as I have described would forgive such a man as I have described my friend, if he were to break his promise, and see her again within a week of their last parting?"

"She might forgive him, but she would probably lose some little portion of her regard for him."

"Would you?"

"Yes, certainly."

"You have never been in love?"

"Is not that a bold question, considering how brief has been our acquaintance?"

"But you will forgive me?"

"Yes; and I will answer your question. I am in love; and what you will think rather extraordinary, perhaps, I have never seen the object of my affections."

"How can one love a being whom one has never seen?"

"It is possible."

"A hero, whose portrait you have admired?"

"No, he is not a hero—nor have I seen his portrait. I know him only by repute—by description."

"Handsome?"

"No."

"Clever?"

"No."

"Pious?"

"No."

"He has written to you, perhaps, and told you, truly, how beautiful you are?"

"He has never seen me, though he has written to me, and I have answered his epistle."

"But what an odd thing for a man to be in love with a lady whom he has never seen, and to offer her marriage; and for that lady, who has never seen him, to accept his offer!"

"You have jumped to several erroneous conclusions. I did not say that he was in love with me—I did not say that he had offered me marriage—I did not say that I had accepted his offer—I only said that I loved a man whom I had never seen."

"Then how do you know that he is not handsome and clever?"

"One who knew him well described him to me;

that is to say, his person and his mental capacity. Of his character, his own letter to me was the most satisfactory guarantee."

"I have been all my life passionately curious. May I go on questioning?"

"By all means; but you must content yourself with my replies."

"Tell me—is he rich?"

"He is not poor."

"Is he old?"

"He is not very young."

"Is he tall?"

"He is not short."

"Is he stout?"

"He is not slender."

"Is he polished?"

"He is far from rude."

"Is it one of my brothers?"

"No! Who are these persons approaching us from yonder end of the walk? I am rather short-sighted."

"Who are they? Why, it is your brother Edgar and my sister Mary! How earnestly he is talking to her, and how attentively she is listening to the dear little man! They do not see us. He is making love to her; and it is another proof to me of his wonderful courage, seeing how much taller Mary is than himself. Let us conceal ourselves; not for the purpose of listening to their discourse, but that we may not interrupt it. When they have passed us, we will make our escape unseen by them. Come; stand behind this tree."

Miss West obeyed the mandate, and Reckless and herself were speedily concealed from the sight of the approaching couple.

"Did I not tell you," said Reckless, when the couple

had passed on, that he was making love to her? Did you hear what he said?—*'I shall join the army—I shall rise—I will win a name—that beauty will not blush to hear!'* ”

“But he was only quoting from that beautiful play, *The Lady of Lyons*,” said Miss West.

“True,” said Reckless; “but the quotation had reference to himself—I am certain of it. I predicted—I told him that he would fall in love with one of my handsome sisters; and sure enough he has done so. Do you not think Mary handsome?”

“Very—very handsome. Beautiful—magnificently beautiful.”

“But not over brilliant as regards intellect? She is not stupid; but she has no talents.”

“I have had no opportunity of judging of Miss Reckless's abilities; but I think her as kind and as warm-hearted as she is lovely. Poor Edgar! I hope the General's—General Ferret's—prophecy may be fulfilled.”

“What was that?”

“That Edgar will become a very distinguished soldier—one of whom his country will be proud.”

“Did you observe the expression on the face of my sister?”

“No.”

“Not that ridiculous eagerness, and half-opened mouth, when she was listening to him? He has made his conquest; take my word for it. It is an accomplished fact, as the French people would say. But tell me something further about this love affair of your own. I do like so to talk of love!”

“No; we have discoursed sufficiently on that subject. Let us return to the Castle; I am cold.”

"My own dear Leo—— I beg you very many pardons, Miss West. How very bracing the air is after the storm of last night," said Reckless, incoherently; and having taken Miss West back to the Castle, he walked into the stables, and ordered his horse. The order obeyed, and the steed brought out, Reckless mounted and rode over to the Downs. What he wanted there he scarcely knew; but he put several questions to the servants, who were able to give him very little, if any, information on the main points whereon he had interrogated them. The butler could not inform him of the Colonel's address in town, and had received no instructions as to forwarding any letters received by post. The groom, who had carried the letter to Reckless Castle on the previous evening, was not aware what the Colonel was going to do with the grey Arab horse; but he knew, he said, that when that animal's blood was up, and he was touched with a spur, he galloped so fast that he took the wind out of the man who was riding him. "He would win the Derby, it is my opinion, sir," added the groom; "but he is a very melancholy 'oss, sir, and cries most bitterly at times. P'r'aps it is on account of being brought to a country that is foreign to him. And he sleeps a tremendous lot, sir."

"Has he any vice?" said Reckless.

"Vice, sir? He is as quiet as a dog, and rather sluggish till he is warm or pushed, and then he flies like a bird, sir."

"He has been a race-horse," said Reckless.

"Indeed, sir?" said the groom. "Well, the Colonel, who is a very close gentleman in his speech, never said anything about him; nor did Miss Ornsbie—beyond that he was a great favourite, and was to be taken great

care of. *I thought he was Miss Ornsbie's saddle-'oss in that part of the world as they have come from.*"

"Why did you think that?"

"Because she rides him now and then about the grounds, and has him brought up to the kitchen-door to eat bread and loaf-sugar out of her hand. He is a very powerful 'oss when you come to look over him; and his speed is horful, surely. Shall I take his clothes off, and bring him out into the yard, sir?"

"Yes."

The groom brought out this prodigy of an Arab, and Reckless examined him very minutely. The horse was not more than fourteen hands three inches high; but he was a very long horse, and deep in his body; and for his bulk, his legs were very short. His muscle was immense, and his crest as hard as a stone. Reckless caressed the animal, and kissed his nostrils very tenderly; not in consequence of the animal's individual merit, but because the groom had said Miss Ornsbie was in the habit of feeding him with her own hand.

While riding back from the Downs to the Castle, Reckless felt ashamed—ashamed of having visited Leonora's late abode in her absence, and of having discoursed with the servants of the Colonel's establishment. But then he excused himself unto himself, by saying to himself, "Ah! I love her to madness, and I could not help it!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

A CORRESPONDENCE.

Two days after the despatch of his letter to the address of Mrs. Croppitt, Reckless received the following reply (we have corrected the spelling of Mrs. Croppitt's epistle):—

"SIR,—My sister bids me say to you, that if you had called upon her, as you promised to do, before leaving the University, perhaps she would have told you what you wish to know, and would, perhaps, have given you a copy of the picture of your mother, which you so much wanted; but as you have not kept your promise, all that she will now say to you is what she used to make her late husband say to the Tory candidate who asked him for his vote for the borough,—‘Sir, I wish you well—but—’ and then stop.

"I am very sorry, sir, that *I* cannot tell you Mr. Brown's real name. He was before my time at College; and when he was brought back, it was under the name of Brown, and by no other name have I ever known him. Poor gentleman! nothing has been heard of him since he was carried away. If the people here who befriended him so long only knew that no harm had come of him, and that he was taken care of, their minds would be easy.

"Your obedient servant,

"SOPHY CROPPITT.

"TRIN. COLL. CAMBRIDGE,

"*Thursday.*"

Reckless read the above several times, then pondered considerably as to his course of action. "I will make

this letter," said he to himself, "an excuse for discovering the present abode of Leonora, and for writing to her, if not of obtaining another meeting. He therefore sat down and wrote as follows :—

"MY OWN LEONORA,—You were curious to know who was the half-witted person whom I saw in the company of your father in London. I wrote to my bedmaker for information on this point, and enclose you the reply I have just received. Perhaps Colonel Ormsbie will, on your suggestion, 'case the minds of those who supported him in his poverty.' I would do so, if I dared. Tell me what are your wishes. When do you leave England? I am to remain at the cavalry dépôt for some time—some few months—until a batch of recruits are going out. How cruel of you, Leonora, to cut off our correspondence. If you only knew how truly unhappy and miserable I have been, and am, you would, I am satisfied, keep me informed of that which I so much long to be informed of,—your health, your feelings, your movements, and all that in any way relates to your own dear self.

"The only hope that I entertain of this reaching you is, that the Baboo, to whom I enclose it, will deliver it into your hands. His address, he said, was 'the Clarendon.' Fortunately, I remember that.

"I entreat you to reply to me, my own Leonora; and believe me your ever affectionate

"AUGUSTUS."

Reckless's note to the Baboo was as follows :—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have to ask your forgiveness for taking so great a liberty with you; but would you do me the great favour of delivering into the hands of

Miss Ornsbie the enclosed note, on the first occasion of your meeting her. I am ignorant of her address. She omitted to leave it with me, and has not written to me since she took her departure from this part of the country. Your kindness of manner towards me on the only occasion of our meeting, convinces me that you will excuse the trouble I am now imposing upon you.

"Will you further forgive me, if, upon the superscription of this letter, I have, in my ignorance, addressed you improperly?"

"I remain, my dear sir, very faithfully yours,

"AUGUSTUS RECKLESS.

"The Baboo Zemindar,

"Clarendon Hotel."

When this letter was put into the hands of the Baboo by the head-waiter of the hotel, and after the Baboo had made himself acquainted with the contents, he sat down and answered it in the following words:—

"CLARENDON HOTEL.

"MY VERY GOOD SIR,—I will see Miss Ornsbie to-morrow. I will see her alone. I will give her your letter. I will tell her she has used you very ill in not writing to you. I will send this by a messenger on horseback, so that you will get it to-night before you go to rest. The address on your letter will do very well. If you should come to London while I am here, it will afford me very great pleasure to see you.

"I am, always, yours,

"THE BABOO ZEMINDAR."

And, in conformity with his promise, the Baboo did send a special messenger with the letter above recited, and it did reach Reckless that night, and the perusal

thereof did afford him some consolation. And in conformity, also, with the first promise contained in the above letter, the Baboo did, on the following morning, see Leonora. He called at one o'clock—an hour when the Colonel was invariably in the City. Mr. Brown had gone out to see the Zoological Gardens, accompanied by Mr. Martin.

"I have a letter for you," said the Baboo—"a letter from your lover. He did not know your address, it seems. Has he offended you, that you treat him in this way?"

"No; but it were better—better for both of us—that we did not correspond or meet for the present," said Leonora.

"Bah! Marry him in this country. He is handsome; he is of good birth—that is plain. He is clever; he talks well; he is good-hearted—his face tells me that. He is frank and open in his manners; he is a good-tempered and amiable young man—of that I am certain. And, to crown all, you love him, or I am sure he would not be the possessor of that ring. Take my advice—marry him in this country."

"No. Ask yourself whether I could explain to him, all those facts of which you are in possession?"

"You might—oh, yes."

"Impossible! Impossible!"

"Do you think, then, if you told him all, that he would say, 'Well, our engagement is at an end?'"

"No, I do not think that."

"Then why not tell him, if you think it necessary that he should be informed at all on those points? Why give yourself the pain of relating them either here or in India?"

"The pain of concealing them from the man whom

hope to have for my husband would be far greater than that of divulging them."

"Well, if you are determined, it is useless to talk further on that subject. But you must write to him, at all events, until you go away from England, which will be next month—so the Colonel tells me. The Colonel will burn his fingers with all those Companies. He will lose all that money which he has acquired one way or another. But never mind that; you must write to your lover. Remember, you have made me your confidante, and you must in some things be governed by my advice. I saw all the beauties at the Palace the other day—the maids of honour, the aristocracy—but I did not see one so beautiful as yourself."

"You know, Baboo, how insensible I am to flattery."

"It is not flattery. You know that you are beautiful."

Leonora sighed, and was silent.

"I must be going," said the Baboo, rising; "I have an appointment at two o'clock. You have promised, or you will promise me, that you will write to him, and keep his mind at rest. Poor boy! I do pity him from the very bottom of my heart. I have seen a great many young English gentlemen; but I have not seen one that I like so much as him. I will consider that you have promised me to write to him. Ah, me! It is beginning to snow again. Were you not very frightened when you first saw the snow in this country? I was."

"You forget, Baboo, that several years of my life were spent at Mussoorie, in the Himalaya Mountains."

"Yes, I had forgotten that—miserable Bengallee that I am! God bless you. Farewell."

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When the Baboo had gone, Leonora read the letter

of Augustus. Her heart was touched by his appeal, and she wrote him a long and affectionate letter. With regard to the half-witted person, Mr. Brown, she wrote: "This is a matter which I cannot discuss with my father; but if you should have an opportunity of assuring those who are interested in his welfare, that he is safe and well provided for, I think you will be justified in doing so. I feel satisfied that my father has a right to the custody of Mr. Brown's person, or he would not have taken it upon himself." And it was thus that she concluded her letter:—

"I consent to correspond with you up to the time of our departure from England, and will write to you whenever an opportunity offers. Pray remember me very kindly to Sir Charles and Lady Mary Reckless, and to the other members of your family, from whom I received so many acts of kindness during our stay at the Downs.

"Believe me,

"Ever affectionately yours,

"LEONORA."

Leonora was about to seal this epistle, when the Colonel entered the room.

"To whom are you writing?" he inquired.

"To Mr. Reckless—Mr. Augustus Reckless," she replied.

"Has he written to you?"

"Yes."

"Is this the first of your correspondence?"

"Yes."

"He has offered you marriage?"

"Not in his letter of to-day."

"Previously—verbally?"

"Yes."

"You did not refuse him?"

"No: I accepted his offer on certain conditions." And here Leonora informed the Colonel faithfully of the precise relations existing between herself and Augustus.

"Are you mad, my child," asked the Colonel, "that you impose those conditions?—that you wish him to journey to the East? Listen to me. If you love him, marry him at once. You have my consent. He is young, it is true; but old enough to marry. I am an advocate for early marriages, if the parties have ample means. He is not rich—cannot be, as a younger son of a man who has such a number of children; but the fortune will be on your side. I will settle upon you a handsome competency—say fifteen hundred pounds a-year. I approve of the match. I was cold to him the other day, because he vexed me; but I like the youth, and would delay my departure for half a year, in order to have the satisfaction of knowing that he was my son-in-law."

"My feelings dictate to me that ——" (She was about to speak at some length, but the Colonel interrupted her.)

"Have *I* no feelings to be consulted in this matter? See you in the East? No: he must not see you in the East. I do not consent to his seeing you in the East."

"Would you have me leave the home of my childhood for ever, without revisiting it?"

"Yes! Marry, my child! marry! I entreat you to marry any man of equal birth upon whom you can bestow your affections: and here is one who loves you,

and into whose family you would be received with every kind of regard and tenderness."

It was not the Colonel's wont to talk to his daughter in so kind and affectionate a manner as he adopted on this occasion; and Leonora was moved, and for a few moments wavered. While she was wavering, the Colonel continued—

"Leonora, I have bought the Downs,—the house, the furniture, and all that pertains to the estate. It is a valuable property—worth *more* than fifteen hundred pounds a-year, much more; and it is, as you know, a delightful residence. Marry—marry Mr. Reckless previous to my departure from England, and I will settle the Downs upon you both, and your offspring."

"Father," said Leonora, in a calm but firm and dignified tone of voice, "if you could settle upon me the entire kingdom of England, and confer upon the man who may be my husband the highest rank in the peerage of Great Britain, I would not consent to marry him unless I was at liberty to divulge to him that fact of which *I* am not ashamed, and of which *you* ought not to be ashamed."

"You are insane, Leonora."

"I am only just to Mr. Reckless and to myself."

"Then put to him the question in this country. Have an interview with him; tell him in private all that you could tell him in India, enjoining him, upon his honour, under any circumstances, to be silent; and then, if he be willing, surely all your scruples must be overcome."

"No; he must see as well as hear." And burying her face in her hands, Leonora wept bitterly.

"Then, be it so, my child," said the Colonel, placing

her beautiful head near his heart; "be it so. But I sadly fear you will repent of not having followed your father's advice."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEVIL'S, DIAMOND.

LEONORA'S letter afforded Reckless great consolation. It did not, however, clear up any of those mysteries which hung over the house of Ornsbie, and so perplexed him who panted to unravel them. There was something mysterious even in the Colonel's wealth and eccentricities. Purchasing a property like the Downs, and returning to India to do regimental duty, seemed in itself an eccentricity. Nor could Reckless appreciate the expensive whim of carrying from country to country a valuable race-horse, and using him for hack purposes. Then the indisposition to *let* for hire any house that he had ever occupied. And notwithstanding this profuse waste of money on the Colonel's part, he was in some matters a very mean man; indeed, as already stated, many of his friends, as well as enemies, thought the Colonel quite mad, though perfectly capable of managing his affairs, and "getting through" his professional duties in a very respectable manner. In several engagements on the field of battle he had exhibited great courage and coolness, and this perhaps was the chief reason why the authorities at head-quarters overlooked the fact that the Colonel did the State very little service—at any station to which he had been ap-

pointed with a brigade—beyond signing his name, and having a look at his men occasionally. The Adjutant did all the work. And this sometimes happens in other countries, as well as sometimes in India.

And now there came over Reckless a new perplexity. How was he to instal himself once more in the good graces of the Colonel? Should he write to him? should he see him? He asked himself these questions several times. What was his joy when he made the discovery that there was no occasion for his doing either! In her next letter, Leonora informed Augustus that her father was aware of their attachment and engagement; that she had been placed in a position when it became necessary, in her judgment, to make the truth known to him; and that he entirely approved of her choice, whom he would be glad to have for a son-in-law.

“*I will see the Colonel!*” exclaimed Reckless, on reading this second epistle; “*I will see him, and ask him to beg of Leonora to consent to my going to India in the same ship with them, or, at all events, to suffer me to visit at the house until their departure.*” And in furtherance of this design, Reckless, on the following morning, took the coach (the railroad, in those days, did not go within eight miles of the Castle), and arrived in London a little after eleven o’clock.

His first visit was to the Clarendon, where he found the Baboo at breakfast. He was invited to sit down, and partake of the delicacies on the table. The ride had given Reckless an appetite, and he obeyed cheerfully. The repast over, and several native gentlemen (relations of the Baboo, to whom Reckless was introduced) having retired, Reckless, with enthusiastic

delight, communicated the important fact contained in Leonora's last letter, and very warmly thanked the Baboo for his services.

"Ah!" said the Baboo, twirling his moustache gently, "Ah! I am glad. Yes, the Colonel will consent. Why not?" And again the Baboo's eye fell upon the ring, and rested there; and he became thoughtful and somewhat embarrassed. "Oh, yes; why not?" he repeated several times over.

"Could you tell me, Baboo, at what place and at what hour most convenient to himself, in your opinion, that I could see Colonel Ornsbie?"

"The Colonel," said the Baboo, "will be with me at three o'clock this day, on matters of important business; but at half-past three we shall have finished our work; and if you will call at that hour, I will give you an opportunity of seeing him in this room, and talking to him in private."

"You are very kind, indeed," said Augustus—"very kind."

"Only fancy!" exclaimed the Baboo, taking the hand of Augustus, and glaring at his ring, "only fancy seeing

'THE DEVIL'S DIAMOND!'

and on the finger of an Englishman, in London!!! I can scarcely believe my eyes. It would not surprise me now if I were to be shown the Koh-i-noor, out of the territories of Runjeet Singh."

"Why is it called 'the Devil's Diamond,' Baboo?"

"I know not. But that is the name of that stone—the name by which it is known in history—the history of several native Courts—

'SHYTAN KA HEERA;'

which means—

‘THE DEVIL’S DIAMOND.’

In this country the value of that stone would be very trifling: say in its best moments—its *brilliant* moments—not more than £20; and in its worst moments, nothing at all, or only the value of the gold which forms the setting. In India its value is incalculable—so incalculable, that I would not accept it as a gift, much as I covet it, if the condition were that I should wear it on my finger in the Upper Provinces of India, or even in the Lower Provinces. I never saw that ring till the other day, but I knew it instantly, from the wonderful description of it; and I had heard—often heard—that the possessor of it was Colonel Ormsbie; and often have I and others joked with him about it. But it was a subject he always turned away from—sometimes angrily. Does he know that you wear this ring?”

“I do not know. Possibly he is *not* aware that this is the love-token which his daughter gave to me.”

“Then I would advise you to take it off during your interview with him.”

“I cannot do that.”

“Why not?”

“Because it was placed where it now is by Leonora’s fingers, and by none others—not even by my own—shall it be removed.”

“Then wear your left hand gloved when you see the Colonel to-day.”

“To that I have no objection,” said Augustus.

* * * * *

Reckless, after leaving the Baboo, who was going to pay some visits, roamed about the streets of London. Having nothing better to do, he visited his various tradesmen, or rather those of Sir Charles; for Augustus

TRADESPeOPLE.

was not yet "out of the nursery," in one sense of the word. To be more explicit, he was not yet on any fixed allowance; for after leaving Cambridge his guinea-a-day ceased, Sir Charles being quite prepared to pay, as he had done hitherto, his son's tailor's bill, shoemaker's bill, hatter's bill, and hosier's bill. At each of these establishments, Reckless gave an order (not an extravagant one); for he discovered that he wanted something as soon as he entered their doors and looked round him. By the way, it was upon this day that Reckless—like a young but powerful colony—asserted inwardly his Independence, and opened an account with the world in his own name. It was not so much for the purpose of giving an order, as for talking and whiling away the time, that Reckless walked from the establishment of one tradesman to that of another. They had known him in these shops ever since he had been a boy of ten years of age; and partly in emulation of Sir Charles and Lady Mary, and partly acting on his own impulse, he never passed (whether he wanted anything or not) one of them without going in, and saying to any of the partners of the houses, "How do you do Mr. So-and-so? I hope you and all your family are quite well, and have no reason to complain of fortune." Sir Charles and Lady Mary were not of that class of people who think it sufficient to buy from, and pay unto, those tradespeople with whom they may for years deal. They took an interest in them and their fortunes, and trusted them just as implicitly as they were themselves trusted. And the children of Sir Charles and Lady Mary imbibed from their parents the same feelings, and had the satisfaction of knowing—to say nothing of the bliss

of being freed from that horrible idea of imposition—that they were not preyed upon.

Augustus Reckless was seated on the counter of Messrs. Dory and Down, tailors, in Bond-street, smoking his cigar, and giving his opinion (which had been specially invited) on some spring patterns for waist-coats, when, suddenly taking out his watch, he discovered that it was within five minutes of half-past three. He therefore left the shop, and hastened to the Clarendon.

"Is the Baboo in the house?" inquired Augustus of the head-waiter.

"The Prince Zemindar, sir?"

"Yes; the Indian gentleman with whom I breakfasted this morning."

"Yes, sir."

"Is there any one with him?"

"A Colonel somebody, sir; a Bengal officer."

"Colonel Ornsbie?"

"I think that was the name on his card, sir."

"Announce Mr. Reckless."

"Yes, sir." •

When Augustus entered the room in which the Colonel and the Baboo were sitting, the former was the first to rise. Approaching Augustus in a very kind and courteous manner, he held out his hand, and receiving that of Reckless, he pressed it very warmly, smiled, and looked into the young man's eyes; but the Colonel *said* nothing. His smile and look, however, were far more eloquent than words could have been; they conveyed more of regard and of gladness to see Reckless than could any amount of conventional phrases.

"Come near the fire, my good young friend," said

the Baboo, "and warm your hands; it is a cold day."

And before Augustus had time to finish the thankful reply he had commenced, the Baboo had quitted the apartment, and he found himself alone with the Colonel. It was quite evident to Reckless, from the manner in which Colonel Ornsbie received him, that the Baboo had prepared the Colonel for his visit; and the rapidity with which the Colonel began the conversation as soon as the Baboo had disappeared, confirmed this idea, so accurately formed.

The colloquy was as follows:—

CHAPTER XXV.

COLONEL ORNSBIE AND RECKLESS: A DIALOGUE.

The Colonel. It pleased me to learn, Mr. Reckless, that you had won my daughter's heart.

Augustus. Colonel Ornsbie, I need scarcely say how great is my satisfaction on hearing that sentence.

The Colonel. You are going to India to join a regiment, and at her instance?

Augustus. Yes, Colonel.

The Colonel. It is a silly whim of hers, Mr. Reckless. No man who has a competency should go to India.

Augustus. But I have barely a competency, Colonel.

The Colonel. As the husband of Leonora; you would have more than a competency. If my daughter becomes your wife, and you settle in England, the Downs will be her marriage portion.

Augustus. You are indeed bountiful, Colonel.

The Colonel. Listen to me, Mr. Reckless. I went to India when I was seventeen years of age. I was one of several younger sons. My elder brother was a rich man, but he refused to make me any allowance. I had nothing but my pay. I lived beyond it, and got into debt. I contracted numerous bad habits; smoking from morning till night, and often from night till morning; and sipping brandy and water, or drinking wine and beer to an extent almost incredible. I also imbibed a taste for the turf; bought race-horses—at first with money borrowed at fifty per cent.—and was my own jockey. I gambled also at cards, billiards, and with the dice. At twenty-four years of age—that is to say, when I had just served seven years in the Horse Artillery—an aunt of mine in this country died, and left to me, Paul Ornsbie, the entire bulk of her fortune, which amounted to £40,000. I at once gave up racing, billiards, and cards, and took to speculating. I had become used to the climate, and the life I led had then too many charms to be easily abandoned. I became more attached, indeed, to India than to my own country, which I did not care to visit until last year; and then it was only upon matters of business. No, Mr. Reckless; if it can be so arranged, hold your commission in some regiment at home; or if you should find a military life irksome, retire to the Downs and live at your ease. For your own sake, and for Leonora's, I do not wish you to go to India.

Augustus. My wishes, Colonel, are identical with your own; but Miss Ornsbie's will is opposed to them.

The Colonel. I have already spoken to her (for she told me of the conditions she imposed), and I will speak to her again on the subject. I will tell her that

I have seen you, and have invited you to visit at the house whenever you may feel so disposed.

Augustus. I thank you, Colonel.

The Colonel. But, stay! "Stay, Mr. Reckless! (Here the Colonel mused, and passed his hand tightly across his forehead, as though some difficulty lay in his way.) You had better not see Leonora until after I have written to you; and when you see her, sir, importune her. I have known many obstinate people yield to importunity. Sometimes when the ear is wearied with entreaty, the heart gives in. Shed tears, if you can. (Here the Colonel smiled.) Some women are melted themselves the moment they behold a man cry. Experience has taught me that. No, no; avoid going to a country which may ruin your health, undermine your constitution, and lead to the contracting of bad habits, when you can remain in your own country in comfort, if not in affluence. I will help to plead your cause; but when the opportunity occurs, you must yourself strain every nerve.

Augustus. I shall not be wanting, Colonel; and it will not be the first time that I have shed tears in your daughter's presence, when she has refused to listen to my entreaties.

The Colonel. A thought has just struck me. Women can often prevail with women, when men fail with them. Think you that Lady Mary—your mother—would be your advocate?

Augustus. She is the kindest of mothers, and I have no doubt she would assist me, Colonel.

The Colonel. Speak to her. She would have great influence with Leonora, because Leonora respects her—loves her. I would, if I were in your place, even go so far as to act an innocent falsehood.

Augustus. How, Colonel?

The Colonel. I would be ill, very ill—love-sick, dying. Women of Leonora's nature and disposition always pity and sympathize with the sick—especially the love-sick. There was a case at Dinapore in 1829. A very good-looking fellow—a Lieutenant in the Engineers—offered no less than three times to the daughter of a Major of a native infantry regiment. The girl refused him. On the third occasion of being refused he took to his bed, had his head shaved, and caused it to be given out that he was dying. He expressed a wish to see his beloved for the last time. She consented, and was taken by her father and mother to the bedside of the Lieutenant. She was so struck with his altered appearance—so touched with the comfortless aspect of his apartment—that she begged to be allowed to attend upon him. The request was acceded to. He rallied, mended under her treatment and care,—after the doctors had “given him up” (they said),—and ultimately, in a week or so, he recovered. A fortnight afterwards she became his bride! His bald head, and a rag steeped in vinegar across his forehead, had done more for him than all the attention he had paid her and the speeches he had made to her during a courtship of sixteen months!

Augustus. I feel, Colonel, that my heart would not allow me to deceive Miss Ornsbie in any way. It must be a sad reflection for a man that he has gained the consent of a woman under false pretences.

The Colonel. Not if he has already won her heart. In this case it is simply a question of time and place—namely, whether you marry in England, within three or six months; or whether the ceremony is to be performed one, or two, or three years hence, in the Upper

Provinces of India. One or other of you may die before the year is out, and——

Augustus. True, Colonel; but——

The Colonel. Well, you are right, perhaps. Let us waive all that. Now, Mr. Reckless, there is another matter, of less importance, but still of much importance, upon which I would say a few words. My daughter gave you a ring?"

Augustus. She did, Colonel; I have it on my finger at this moment.

The Colonel. My daughter had a perfect right to do what she pleased with that ring. It was given to her; it belonged to her. I cannot say that it is not stolen property—for it has been stolen, like other jewels, and recovered, and stolen again, and recovered. Often and often has this happened. That ring, however, came into the possession of the person who gave it to Leonora honestly—that is to say, if an honest title to a chattel once stolen can be acquired by the last possessor. More than two hundred years have elapsed since that ring was last stolen. Several generations have passed away, and time has obliterated the crime which tainted the possession of those who last took it wrongfully. I have a guard, or rather a case, made of pure gold, which fits over and conceals that ring. This case, which is by no means unsightly, covered as it is with Arabic characters, is fastened by a spring, which opens by pressure. I will give you that case; and should Leonora be proof against reason and argument—should she still insist upon your going to India, and becoming an inmate of our house in India previous to marrying you, I hope—nay, I request—that you will wear the ring concealed by the case, and on no account suffer the stone to be seen by any eyes—European or native—except those of yourself and Leonora.

Augustus. I will consider your request a command, Colonel, which I am bound to obey.

The Colonel. Do you remain in town, or do you return to your home this evening?

Augustus. I thought of returning.

The Colonel. You had better do so, and talk to Lady Mary. Meanwhile, I will endeavour to bring Leonora to reason. You shall hear from me the day after tomorrow. The Baboo has gone out—gone to sit for a portrait. I, too, must be going. In what direction are you walking?

Augustus. Towards the Regent Circus, Colonel.

The Colonel. I will accompany you part of the way thither.

* * * * *

It was at the eastern end of Conduit-street that Colonel Ornsbie parted with Reckless. The former turned round, and went to his home in Davies-street; the latter, after loitering about the Circus for a few minutes, smoking a cigar, and thinking deeply of all that the Colonel had said to him, got upon a coach which was driven up to the booking-office, and was presently on his way to the Castle.

“There is a screw loose somewhere,” said Reckless to himself, as the coach bowled along the road. “Why should he be so anxious to get rid of his daughter at once, notwithstanding he gives her, or is ready to give her, so handsome a fortune? The Downs! only fancy the Downs as a marriage portion! But what do I care for the Downs? It is for Leonora that my heart is bleeding! Dear Leonora! a cornet’s pay and thee rather than the richest heiress in the realm!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

AUGUSTUS RECKLESS TALKS TO HIS MOTHER, AND COLONEL ORNSBIE
TALKS TO HIS DAUGHTER—AND OTHER MATTERS.

RECKLESS related to Lady Mary the whole particulars of his interview with the Colonel; and Lady Mary, having in view the happiness and good fortune of her son, promised him that she would journey to town, see Leonora, and do all in her power to induce the young lady to comply not only with the wishes of Augustus, but those of her own father. Still, it must be confessed that Lady Mary now disliked the mysteriousness which attached to Miss Ornsbie's "conditions," and was as much perplexed in endeavouring to unravel them as was Reckless himself. It was this difficulty, in fact, of comprehending the "conditions," that induced the dislike of them. Lady Mary furthermore thought, as did her son, that it *was* strange that the Colonel should not wish Augustus to go to India, and she had a conversation with Sir Charles on the subject.

"I'll tell you what, my love," said Sir Charles; "Gus will be a very lucky fellow if he can get her *anyhow*; for she is beautiful, ladylike, clever, sensible, and, with the Downs as her marriage portion, rich; and what on earth could any man desire further? That her birth is good, I have no doubt. The Colonel comes of a very old family; and that the mother's side has been equal to his in this respect, one has only to look at the hands, feet, and movements of the girl, and to listen to her voice. Even if it should be, as you have just hinted, that the Colonel had run

away with some young lady, or some other man's wife, and that this child was born before the performance of the marriage ceremony, I don't think that ought to be a bar to Augustus marrying the girl. But I am quite satisfied such is not her position; and as to the other point upon which you just now so delicately touched, my dear Mary, it is—forgive me for saying so—utter nonsense. I would be sworn that she is as virtuous and as pure-minded as our own daughter. Besides, if there were the faintest stain upon her name, she would scarcely ask her lover to meet her in the land where she, and all that relates to her, must be so well known."

"True," said Lady Mary; "and such was the conclusion to which I came, when I first debated the question with myself and with Augustus."

While this conversation was being held at Reckless Castle, Colonel Ornsbie was talking to his daughter. Mr. Brown had finished his plate of sweet biscuits, his bottle of olives (of which he was as passionately fond as was Beau Brummell of biscuit de Rheims), his bottle of Burgundy, and had been conducted to his sleeping apartment by Mr. Martin, who was his valet as well as his keeper. The house was as still as the grave.

The Colonel and Leonora were seated near the fire, each occupying an easy-chair.

"Leonora," the Colonel began, "I am not sure that I have not changed my mind. I am not sure that I shall not remain in England for the next two years—spending the summers at the Downs, and the winters in London."

"Well, papa?"

"In that case, what about your engagement with Mr. Reckless?"

"It will remain in abeyance."

"He may not consent to that."

"The option will be with him."

"Suppose this man whom you love should say, 'You must marry me now, or never?'"

"I should unhesitatingly reply, 'Then, *Never!* Be it never!'"

"Then you cannot love the man."

"I do; as fondly and as fervently as woman ever loved."

"Then, Leonora, you are a fool."

"An honest one—if I be a fool."

"Do you mean by that remark to imply that there is any dishonesty in my wishing you to marry him in this country?"

"No."

"Do I ask you to conceal from him anything that you think he should be acquainted with?"

"No."

"Then why speak to me of being an honest fool when I tell you that you *are* a fool?"

"This is one of those points upon which it is impossible to argue or to reason. You might as well attempt to reason me into loving some man for whom I have a repugnance."

"Leonora, may I divulge to Mr. Reckless the reason why you wish him to journey to the East? It would not be a very pleasing matter to me—more than old enough, as I am, to be his father; but I would do so, for your sake."

"For my sake?"

"Yes; for your sake."

"You do not—you cannot—or you will not com-

prehend me. If, after I have exhibited to Mr. Reckless a scene which he shall witness—that is to say, if he come to the East—if, after I have then told him the truth, which I will convey to him in four words—four words exactly—(what are those four words, you well know)—if then I observe in his features one look of horror,—I do not say surprise, remember, but horror,—if I observe one look of horror, I will not marry him.”

The Colonel covered his face with his thin hands, and remained silent for several minutes.

“You have already consented that he shall see as well as hear,” continued Leonora.

“I have, my child—I have,” said the Colonel; “but are there not others, or, at least, one other, who must be consulted, or who rather has the *right* to be consulted?”

“The consent of that other I shall have no difficulty in obtaining. Indeed, I have already obtained it—long ago I obtained that consent, which was gladly given.” •

“How? How can you have obtained it?”

“The conditions I have imposed are not only in accordance with my own feelings, but they were suggested unto me—if not dictated; and I pledged myself——”

“In that case I will not attempt further to alter your determination. But I regret it”—and with these words the Colonel rose from his chair, rang the bell for his candle, kissed Leonora’s forehead, and retired to take his night’s rest.

On the following morning, the Colonel, at the dawn of day, as was his wont in every clime and season,

arose, made his toilet, and then sat down to write his letters. The first was to Augustus, and was couched in the following terms:—

“DAVIES-STREET, BERKELEY-SQUARE.

“*Private and Confidential.*

“MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—I have failed in my attempt to induce my daughter to change her mind; and I greatly fear that Lady Mary’s advocacy would be profitless, and that your own also would be in vain. You must come to the East.

“I enclose you the cover for the ring of which I spoke to you. Please acknowledge the receipt thereof.

“Believe me, ever affectionately yours,

“PAUL ORNSBIE.

“Augustus Reckless, Esq.,

“*Reckless Castle, Kent.*”

This epistle did not arrive at Reckless Castle until after Lady Mary, attended by Augustus, had left for London. By the same post there came a letter for

“Edgar West, Esq.,

“Care of Sir Charles Reckless, Bart.,

“*Reckless Castle.*”

It was from Sir Edward Ferret, and ran thus:—

“MY DEAR EDGAR,—Since I last saw you, I have been offered, and have accepted, the appointment of Governor-General of India. I desire to have you on my personal staff as an A.D.C., so hold yourself in readiness to join me in the course of the next fortnight.

“Very sincerely yours,

“EDWARD FERRET,

“*Lieut.-General.*

“Captain West, &c. &c. &c.”

"Bless me!" exclaimed little West, rather comically; "this is, indeed, wonderful. I am positively captain, by courtesy, even before I have donned an ensign's uniform, or joined a regiment."

"Dear Edgar!" said his sister, "I congratulate you."

"And may not I?" inquired Miss Reckless, rather archly, looking down at the hand in which the little man held the letter.

"Ah!" sighed little West, looking up into her large and beautiful eyes—"Ah! if I dared tell you, Miss Reckless, the reason why I value so much this appointment to the staff of the General!"

"You may," said she, artlessly. "Do—pray."

"Perhaps, before I leave the Castle, I will take an opportunity of doing so," replied the little man.

There was no one in the drawing-room at that moment save West, his sister, and Miss Reckless. (It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.) Miss West felt that her presence was *de trop*, and left the room. She had scarcely closed the door after her, when Miss Reckless said, "Pray, tell me why you value so much that appointment;" and she blushed crimson while she spoke.

"It is because"—replied the little man, going down upon one knee, and taking the hand of his lovely questioner—"It is because it may lead to my being more worthy of demanding this." And he ventured to kiss the hand of Miss Reckless.

"It is yours already," she replied, raising with her hand her lover from his knees; and then, bending down her head, she suffered him to kiss her cheek.

At this very instant the door of the drawing-room opened, and Sir Charles Reckless entered. Observing

the embarrassment of his daughter and West, Sir Charles said, hurriedly, "I beg you ten thousand pardons, young people, if I have disturbed you; but the truth is, I thought you had all gone out, and that the Castle was deserted, and I left completely alone." With these words Sir Charles retired, went up-stairs into the nursery, took the baby in his arms, and suffered three little ones—the eldest of whom was only six and a half—to gambol with him to their hearts' content. If Lady Mary had been at home, Sir Charles would have been in the fields, superintending the planting of the potatoes; but as she was absent, the estate seemed desolate, and its owner knew not what to do with himself.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LADY MARY RECKLESS AND LEONORA.—LEONORA RETURNS WITH
LADY MARY ON A VISIT TO RECKLESS CASTLE.

AUGUSTUS remained at his hotel while Lady Mary had her interview with Leonora. It was an awkward meeting on either side; for Lady Mary felt that Leonora guessed the object of her visit. After a brief conversation on indifferent matters, Lady Mary took Leonora's hand, and said, "I come to you as an ambassador, to see if I can negotiate on the behalf of my son."

Leonora blushed, but was silent.

"I would not have accepted the office," continued Lady Mary, "had I not been aware that you are mutually and ardently attached to each other."

"Has Augustus informed you of all, Lady Mary? Has he told you that I can only marry him on certain conditions?"

"Yes, he has told me all—even the substance of a conversation which he had recently with Colonel Ornsbie, who gave such a portraiture of Indian life and Indian habits, that I tremble at the idea of my son visiting that country."

"Dear Lady Mary," replied Leonora, "I believe that the habits of Europeans in India—especially young military men—are idle and dissipated. The climate, it is said, provokes indolence and dissipation. But I will not do Augustus the injustice to believe that he would follow in the footsteps of others less strong-minded and less worthy than himself. It is not to test him on this point that I desire to see him in the East. Even if his habits became dissipated, I could not love him less, however much I might regret the change in him. If you knew, Lady Mary, the feeling that prompted me to make that chief condition of my union with your son, you would—I am sure you would—appreciate my desire to see Augustus in my home in India."

"Waive it—waive it, dear girl," said Lady Mary. "Come! come! be one of our family without going again to India. You know—you must know—how much we all love you. Come! waive your conditions."

"If you only knew, Lady Mary," said Leonora, "how it pains me to refuse you anything, you would not again ask me to alter a resolution which a sense of duty dictated to me, and break a promise most solemnly made." Large tears stood in the eyes of Leonora while she spoke, and she pressed tenderly the hand of her visitor. Lady Mary had never seen Leonora look so

exquisitely beautiful as she looked at that moment; had never heard her voice deliver its accents in so sweet and melancholy a tone.

"I am so glad that I have seen you," continued Leonora; "for I have longed to tell you—lest you should have supposed I was needlessly tormenting Augustus—that my reason for wishing not to see him until we meet in India is, that I might possibly be tempted to break faith with myself. It is not very probable, but still it is within the pale of possibility; for when a girl loves as *I* love, it is not easy to withstand oft-repeated entreaties from the lips of the man who has possession of her heart. And if, in a moment of weakness, I were to accede to his request and waive the condition, the remainder of my life would be made up of the most bitter regrets."

"Dear Leonora," said Lady Mary, "I will not importune you further. But before you leave England, I hope the Colonel and yourself will pay us a visit at the Castle."

Leonora hesitated for a moment, and then replied—"In my father's absence, Lady Mary, I could not make an engagement; but, if you will allow me, I will reply to you to-morrow by letter." The last word had scarcely fallen from Leonora's lips, when there was a loud rapping at the door.

"That is my father," said Leonora, becoming deadly pale and trembling, for she had a presentiment of what was about to happen. The Colonel, when invited to spend a few days at the Castle, with his daughter, excused himself on the ground that his time was so short in England, and that the amount of business he had to transact was very great. "But," added the Colonel, "my daughter, who is rather lonely here, will

be only too happy, Lady Mary, to avail herself of your kind invitation. She has my full permission to do whatever she pleases." And the Colonel gave Leonora a look which seemed to say to her, "Go, go—I wish you to go."

"Then come at once," said Lady Mary to Leonora.

Leonora felt how ungracious would have been any excuse after this, and left the room to make hasty preparations for her journey, leaving the Colonel and Lady Mary in the drawing-room. Lady Mary was extolling the beauty and the grace of Leonora, and the Colonel was bowing in acknowledgment of the compliments paid to his daughter in her absence, and was just on the point of paraphrasing the old saying, that "it is indeed sweet to be praised by a praiseworthy man," when the door was opened, and into the room walked Mr. Brown. He approached the Colonel, without taking any notice of Lady Mary. "I wish to discharge that fellow," said Mr. Brown; "he contradicts me. I have discharged him already; but still he follows me. If he continues to do so, I will beat him—kill him."

Lady Mary became very much agitated. The Colonel said to her, hurriedly, "Do not be alarmed; he is perfectly *harmless*" (he laid a peculiar stress on the word), "but excited just now." Then, addressing Mr. Brown, the Colonel said, in a commanding voice, "Edmund, retire to your room."

"I am not alarmed," said Lady Mary, advancing to Mr. Brown, and extending her hand. "Why should I be alarmed?"

Mr. Brown took Lady Mary's hand, looked in her face, and smiled vacantly.

"Do you remember me?" she asked.

"I did when you were living," was the reply. "But

you are dead. At least, I have long since understood that you were dead."

"No; I am still living. Who am I?"

"In the world in which I first knew you, you were—let me whisper in your ear—"

Lady Mary suffered him to do so.

"Am I right—eh?" grinned Mr. Brown.

"Yes," replied Lady Mary, "quite right."

"Mary, dear Mary! But I thought you were dead. I certainly read it in the papers. I have been dead four times since we last met; but have always come to life again. Where was it that I saw you last?"

"Don't you remember?"

"No."

"Was it not at Maddingly?"

"It may have been. But did you not come to Chessdale Priory with your brother? I forget his name just now."

"Yes; but that was the year previous to our meeting at Maddingly."

"I have not parted with the Priory; but I think I shall; for I have had a good offer made for it, and I never cared much for the place, and seldom went there."

"Blexfield was your favourite property."

"And is so still. I spend the greater part of my time there. Ah me! those were merry days. But are you sure you are not dead?"

"Do I look like a ghost?"

"No. You look as young as ever—as young as when I asked you to marry me. Well, I have kept my word—I have never married anybody else." And here Mr. Brown walked moodily to the mantelpiece, looked in the glass, sighed several times, then left the room

and retired to his own apartments on the second floor.

"I thought Sir Edmund was dead," said Lady Mary.

"So did I," said the Colonel, "until a few weeks ago. I found him in Cambridge in the most abject poverty—in short, a beggar in the strictest sense of the word. He squandered the whole of his large fortune years ago, as you may have heard."

"Yes," said Lady Mary.

"When I left England for India, he was what he was when you first knew him, probably. When I next saw him, he was as much altered in his personal appearance as in his circumstances. I was horror-struck. That unfortunate man, Lady Mary, is an uncle of mine."

"Indeed, Colonel? And he was a lover of mine, and a great friend of my brother's, and an acquaintance of Sir Charles."

"He may yet inherit great wealth; and if he do, I shall be his heir—his next of kin. This depends upon a contingency. It is not, however, for the sake of any pecuniary benefit that I or my successors may derive that I have rescued him, and restored him to those comforts which he enjoyed in early life. It is because he is my relative, and because I would, if possible, by prolonging his life, thwart those who fed upon him and fawned upon him in the days of his prosperity, and then neglected and despised him when his fortune was exhausted. Lady Mary, I would ask you, as a favour, not to mention to any one, except to Sir Charles Reekless, that you have seen Sir Edmund in my house, lest my plans should be frustrated, or lest I should find myself involved in an equity suit, or some other suit at law. My object is to prolong the poor

man's life; the object of others would be to shorten it."

"I will not even mention the circumstance to Sir Charles, Colonel," said Lady Mary; "for, unhappily, differences arose between Sir Charles and Sir Edmund some years ago, and the recollection of them would be far from pleasurable to Sir Charles. Sir Edmund evidently does not remember whom I married; for when he whispered in my ear, he pronounced the patronymic of my father's family."

"His brain is almost a perfect blank, Lady Mary; and yet there are times when he can not only call to mind the scenes of bygone days—ay, of his childhood—but discourse in an extremely entertaining strain."

The reappearance of Leonora put an end to this conversation. She was dressed in a dark grey Irish poplin, trimmed with dark blue velvet, a bonnet to match the dress, and a shawl which had been made, after a pattern of her own design, by that colony of exiled Cashmerians who settled in Loodianah. This shawl was fastened by a cat's-eye brooch—a single stone, the size of a pigeon's egg—set very plainly in the purest Indian gold. Leonora looked like a queen. Lady Mary could not help contemplating her,—almost unto rudeness.

The Colonel saw Lady Mary and his daughter into the carriage, then stood bare-headed on the pavement, and kept on bowing and kissing his hand to them until they had turned the corner and were out of sight. Colonel Ornsbie was a particularly courteous man in his manners, especially with ladies.

When Augustus Reckless, who was standing at the door of the hotel, waiting for the carriage, beheld

Leonora seated by his mother's side, his heart palpitated violently, and his face became pale with joy. He approached Leonora and offered his hand; but he could not speak for several seconds, except with his eyes, which were exceedingly eloquent. Leonora returned the gentle pressure of Reckless's hand and the tender looks which he gave her; but there was upon her features an expression of sadness.

Lady Mary was not very talkative on the way back to the Castle. The meeting by accident with a man whom she had not seen or heard of for so many years; nay, one of whom she had long ceased to think, even—believing that he was dead—and then to see him half an idiot, if not utterly imbecile—one who was so clever, so buoyant and full of life when they last met. As soon as they were out of the town, she threw herself back in the carriage, and closing her eyes, lived over again several scenes of the past. Sometimes a smile would flit over her features; at other times, they were shrouded in sorrow, and now and then a sigh would escape her. Hers had been a happy life from the day of her marriage to the present hour. But how many of the friends of her youth, male and female, had been so fortunate? Very few, indeed.

"Poor Sir Edmund!" Lady Mary more than once involuntarily murmured; and then she thought of many a gallant speech that he made her at Blexfield and at the Priory; for she had on several occasions accompanied her brother in his visits to his great friend (That was before she knew Sir Charles Reckless). And the songs that he used to sing now ran in her ears, one especially—a song written by himself, and founded on Boccaccio's story, in the *Decameron*, of Federigo and his Hawk.

The air was rather mournful, and had been composed by a lady whose musical abilities were in great repute in those days:—

SIR EDMUND'S SONG.

I.

Fly, fly, my hawk, to Giovanna fly!
 Tell her that while she lives I cannot die.
 Tell her how lowly is this little cot.
 Tell her how humble is her lover's lot.
 Fly, fly, my hawk!

II.

She knows I once had wealth, which Fortune sends
 To worthless mortals, oft for worthless ends.
 She knows my wealth was not inglorious spent;
 She knows that all in her dear worship went.
 Fly, fly, my hawk!

III.

Tell her that though forgotten, like the dead—
 Tell her that though my worldly wealth hath fled—
 Tell her that though each day more dreary seems,
 Night brings sweet hope—we'll meet, we'll meet in dreams.
 Fly, fly, my hawk!

And other songs of the now half-witted man Lady Mary recalled to memory, and sung them in her imagination, the carriage-wheels forming an accompaniment.

"My mother sleeps," said Augustus, in a low tone of voice to Leonora; "and she is dreaming. See, her lips move."

"No, my son," said Lady Mary, without opening her eyes, "I am not asleep, though I cannot deny that I am dreaming—dreaming of days long since gone by. Be careful how you conclude people are asleep when they shut their eyes. Leonora, you will not think me rude for indulging in this somewhat selfish reverie?"

"No, Lady Mary," said Leonora.

"I hope you have not been so silent for fear of disturbing me. Pray talk as much as you please; truth is often preferable to politeness; and I assure you, that though I may hear, I shall not heed your conversation, for my senses are completely steeped in the past. But how far are we from home, Augustus?"

"Only four miles," was the reply. "We have just come through Claybridge."

"Indeed! then I must conclude my reverie. Do you feel cold, Leonora?"

"Not in the least, Lady Mary; I am so warmly clad."

"And I, too; but the air is very keen. Persons coming from a hot climate like that of India, I should have thought, would feel the cold of Europe much more than you appear to do."

"They do not feel it during the first year, I am told; but that they shiver continually during their second winter in England," said Leonora.

"I hope that will not be your case," said Augustus, looking meaningly into Leonora's eyes.

Leonora made no reply to this remark, but changed the theme of the conversation. And now the carriage entered the avenue of oak-trees which led to the Castle.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOINGS AT RECKLESS CASTLE.

WARM was the welcome that Leonora received from Sir Charles, Miss Reckless, and the rest of the family, down to the little boys, who invariably spoke of her as "that pretty lady." And with no small degree of pride did Reckless introduce to her his friend West, who shortly afterwards, in a confidential conversation with Reckless, admitted that she was "a magnificent girl, certainly; but," added little West, "I should say she *could* be violent. Her eyes realize an expression in Byron's description of a storm on Lake Leman:—

"The sky is changed. And such a change! Oh, night
Of storm and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, *as is the light*
In the dark eye of woman."

"Well, what of that?" said Reckless. "But you are greatly mistaken. Instead of being violent, she is as gentle and as patient as a dove."

"I did not speak of her disparagingly," said West. "But, as I have frequently told you, Reckless, you are continually jumping to conclusions from imaginary premises. I did not say she was a girl of violent disposition or violent temper; I only said that I thought she *could* be violent."

"It is a pity you did not take to the law, West," retorted Reckless; "you would have made such a glorious hair-splitter. But never mind that. What is this piece of good fortune that my sister tells me has befallen you?"

"There!" said West, producing from his pocket the letter of Sir Edward Ferret; "there!"

"Well, that is a piece of luck, certainly."

"And here is another piece of good fortune," said West, withdrawing from his pocket another letter. "Just read that, Reckless. Before I received that, I was in some little difficulty—for there is nothing to my mind so unpleasant as to *ask* any one to be your surety in a pecuniary transaction."

Reckless read aloud:—

"MY DEAR EDGAR,—General Ferret has informed me of his intention to take you to India on his staff. I enclose you a letter of introduction to Messrs. Lupley and Scropell, tailors and army accoutrement makers, Pall Mall. I have told them that I will be responsible for any orders that you may give them in respect to your outfit. I do not advise you to be extravagant in dress; but, as an officer on a staff, you must always dress *particularly* well. I hope—indeed, I demand—that we shall see you as soon as you leave Reckless Castle.

"Very affectionately yours,

"JASPER STEPNEY, Lieut.-General,

K.C.B., K.H., K.G.V."

"Edgar West, Esq."

"What does he mean by K.G.V.?" said Reckless.

"Is it possible, Reckless, you are so ignorant?" said little West. "It means, Knight of the Order of Gustavus Vasa."

"Oh, indeed!" said Reckless. "Well, it is time to dress for dinner."

While the above conversation was being held, Sir Charles and Lady Mary were discoursing in the dressing-room of the latter.

"Here is a pretty discovery I have made to-day," said Sir Charles, laughing.

"What, dear?" inquired Lady Mary.

"Little Mr. West making decided love to Mary, and seemingly with some measure of success."

"I guessed that several days ago. Poor boy!"

"Poor boy! He is a very fortunate boy. I have a piece of news for you."

"What is it?"

"Our friend Lord Avalanche is coming home."

"Surely not. He said that he intended to rule India for ten years."

"But the fates have ordained it otherwise. Sir Edward Ferret succeeds him, and little Mr. West is to be one of his aides-de-camp."

"I am glad to hear that. But what can be the reason of Lord Avalanche coming home?"

"Heaven knows! We shall possibly see it in the papers in a day or two. Most probably Avalanche, as usual, has been standing on his head, and kicking his heels in the air."

"Well, I am rejoiced for little West's sake. But poor Avalanche! I fear it is against his own will that he is returning. And if so, he will be unsafe during the voyage, unless they lock him up in an iron cage, like an African lion or a Bengal tiger."

And in another apartment in the Castle—in a little boudoir—was a conversation held. The parties thereto were Miss Reckless, Miss Ornsbie, and Miss West. But as the conversation of young ladies is sacred, the reader will excuse the author for not transcribing it in this narrative.

At length a bell rang, and from all quarters of the Castle flocked to the drawing-room those whom it

summoned. This bell was a warning that the dinner would soon be upon the table.

It was a rule with Sir Charles Reckless that the last lady guest at the Castle should have the place of honour; and he therefore, instead of taking out Miss West, offered Leonora his arm. Little Mr. West had the honour of escorting Lady Mary, and Augustus the pleasure of conducting Miss West. The remainder of the party (all of them Recklesses) followed after, and took the seats they were accustomed to occupy, according to seniority.

If Leonora looked like a queen in her travelling-dress, she looked something more than a queen in the dress she wore that evening. It was a dress of plain Dacca muslin, white as the driven snow, with flounces of "chicken-work," as it is called in India. Her ornaments were turquoises. A necklace, bracelets, brooch, and ear-rings, all set in silver, and of Delhi workmanship. A silver comb which she wore in her back hair was surmounted by a row of turquoises; and on the middle finger of her left hand she wore a turquoise ring, but this was set in gold.

Miss West was so lost in admiration of Leonora, that her appetite deserted her. All the power that was left to her was to gaze.

"Do you think her beautiful?" said Augustus to Miss West.

"Divine!" was the monosyllabic reply.

It was evidently Leonora's beauty, and her beauty alone, that had captivated Reckless; or, if it were not for her beauty alone, it was for her beauty principally that he valued her—prized her. When he looked round the table, and saw all eyes fixed upon Leonora, and watching the action of her lips while talking to Sir Charles, his

heart swelled with pride, and his vanity knew no bounds. "She is mine! She whom you all so much admire is mine!" said Reckless to himself, filling his glass with sherry, and emptying it. "Her heart, of which that beautiful person is only the casket, belongs *to me!*"

"I have to congratulate you, Mr. West," said Lady Mary, when the second course was being placed on the table, "on your appointment to Sir Edward Ferret's staff."

"Thank you, Lady Mary," sighed the little gentleman, glancing at Miss Reckless, who sat nearly opposite to him.

"And when do you leave England, think you?" Lady Mary asked.

"Very shortly, I apprehend."

"Miss Ornsbie is also going to the East—to India," said Lady Mary; "you will, very likely, meet her there. You admire her very much? do you not?"

"I think her very handsome. But then you must remember, Lady Mary, I have heard so much of her beauty—have listened to so many descriptions of her, that I was quite prepared. It is really a blessing that I have not been disappointed; and that is about the best compliment that I can possibly pay to Miss Ornsbie's personal appearance."

Lady Mary smiled, for she could readily comprehend how Augustus, with all his earnestness, had persecuted his friend with descriptions of his lady-love.

"You should make every allowance for the enthusiasm of a lover, Mr. West," said Lady Mary.

"And, Heaven knows, Lady Mary, I have done so," returned the little man. "Had Augustus divided his descriptions of her amongst all his friends, I would have been perfectly satisfied with, and should have

appreciated, the share that fell to my lot. But (alas!) I believe I was the sole receptacle of his outpourings," said West.

"Ah! Mr. West," said Lady Mary, "it is very true what Romeo says—

"‘He jests at scars who never felt a wound!’"

And while she delivered the line, she kept her eyes steadily fixed on the little man, who became rather confused, for he did not like to confess that his heart had been touched; and yet he felt half ashamed to be silent, and give no reply to Lady Mary's quotation. He longed to quote to her some lines from a play of Massinger's, beginning—

The deepest wounds oft leave the faintest scars;
Love's scars are in our hearts—

but he had not the power. Besides, his eyes had just met those of Miss Reckless, and he longed to quote another line, or rather exclaim—

O matre pulcrâ filia pulcrior!

When the dessert was placed upon the table, and the servants had left the room, Sir Charles Reckless rose and said—"Ladies! it is not usual to propose toasts in your presence; but as this must be considered a family party, I have no hesitation in violating the rule. It affords me the greatest happiness to think that beneath this roof information of the most pleasing nature has been conveyed to the gentleman to whom I now desire you to do honour. I propose the health of our worthy friend, Captain West—and let us hope that he will return to his native land laden with glory and with honours, and deserve of his country acclamations as hearty as those with which we now hail him. Captain West, ladies! The health of Captain West!"

Lady Mary rose. The other ladies, Augustus, and the "two boys," followed her example.

"Let us make the room ring," said Augustus. "Captain West's health! Hip, hip, hip, hooray! hooray! hooray! Hip, hip, hip, hooray! hooray! hooray! Another cheer for Captain West! Hooray! hooray! hooray!"

Sir Charles, Augustus, and "the boys" made a terrific uproar, and the voices of all the ladies, with one exception, were raised to the highest pitch. The exception was Miss Reckless, who stood silent, with her glass in her hand. When the heart is full to overflowing, the tongue invariably declines to discharge its functions.

When silence was restored, West stood up and spoke as follows, in a clear and distinct voice:—

"Lady Mary Reckless, and Ladies: Sir Charles Reckless, and Gentlemen,—You have, indeed, done me great honour. How can the wishes uttered by so many beautiful lips remain ungranted? And how can I thank you for that good fortune which the expression of those wishes seems to insure to me? I shall regard the honour you have done me as so much honour paid in advance, and do my utmost to repay it, or to deserve it, in reality, as speedily as possible. Believe me, that I shall never forget this scene—not even (should I see active service) on the field of battle, midst the din of arms." (He glanced at Miss Reckless.) "Pray accept my warmest thanks for this great kindness you have shown to me."

Shortly after West had concluded his little speech, Lady Mary rose, and led the ladies into the drawing-room; West and Augustus closed up to Sir Charles, and the "two boys" retired to bed.

"We will not sit long over our wine," said the baronet; "we will have one bottle of claret, and then join the ladies. Guss, ring the bell."

The butler entered the room, and brought in upon a salver a letter sealed with a large red seal, and marked "immediate."

"The messenger who brought it, Sir Charles, will wait for an answer," said the butler.

"It is not for me, although it is addressed to my care. It is for you, Guss," said Sir Charles, handing the epistle to his son; "something rather important by the look of it."

Reckless read the letter rapidly, and exclaimed, "Well, that is very kind of him! But, at present, I don't know whether I can accept his offer or not. Listen to what General Ferret has written to me." Reckless read aloud:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—Your friend Edgar West proceeds to India on my personal staff. I cannot offer you a similar appointment permanently, because there may be several local claims which must be attended to. But if you like to accept the appointment of A.D.C. temporarily, I shall be very glad to give you a passage in the same vessel in which I leave this country for India.

"Believe me, very faithfully yours,

"EDWARD FERRET, Lieut.-General.

"Augustus Reckless, Esq."

"Well, that is very handsome, certainly," said Sir Charles. "You must have made a great impression on the General in that single interview at Miss Lear-dotte's."

"I know he did, Sir Charles," said West, "for I

saw the General's eye fixed favourably upon him several times."

"Confound it!" said Augustus, filling his glass; "when does he go?"

"Soon," said little West; "in less than a fortnight, perhaps. Surely you do not hesitate about accepting his offer?"

"I hope not," said Sir Charles.

"I should like a day or two to think about it," said Augustus.

"The General requires an immediate answer," said West. "Remember, if you don't accept the offer, there are scores who will only be too glad to do so. Augustus, it would be downright madness in you to forego such an opportunity."

"So I think," said Sir Charles. "Even if you should not get the permanent appointment on arriving in India, you would have the best claim to it on a vacancy happening."

"I must have two hours, at all events, to deliberate," said Augustus, again filling and emptying his glass—a proceeding which induced Sir Charles to remind him, rather humorously, that he was drinking out of his turn.

"I *must* warm my brain," said Reckless, "before I can decide. One more glass, and then I retire."

"Well, take another glass and retire; but be so good as to send in another bottle," said Sir Charles.

Reckless left the dining-room, went up into his own apartment, and sent a message to Lady Mary, who came to him without delay.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, "I have received a letter from General Ferret. Read it! It must be answered

immediately ; but before I answer it, I must have an interview with Leonora."

"My son, you will not shake her resolution. Accept this offer—this kind offer of the General."

"Not till I have seen Leonora, and spoken with her."

"An interview may be had immediately ; but I pray you not to be so excited. I will return to the drawing-room, speak with Leonora, and conduct her to my boudoir. You will find us there in the course of a quarter of an hour."

"I must see her alone."

"If she consent. In a quarter of an hour come to my boudoir ; you will find us there."

Reckless placed his watch upon the table, and paced his apartment. Several times he put the watch to his ear to ascertain if it were going—so slowly did the minute-hand seem to move. His impatience was equal to that of Juliet, when she exclaims—

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phœbus' mansion ; such a waggoner
As Phaëton would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately !

At length "the time was up," and Reckless, with a beating heart, sought the appointed apartment. The door was open ; he entered, and found Leonora seated on a couch. • She was alone. Reckless closed the door, approached Leonora, knelt before her, and took her hands in his.

"Augustus," said Leonora, calmly, "rise from your knees, and sit near me."

After a brief while, he obeyed her.

"You are not offended with me ?" he said.

"Not offended," she replied ; "but sorry you are so

impetuous—so self-willed—so wishful that I should depart from a course of action which a sense of duty and of honour compels me to pursue.”

“But, dear Leonora!—your father——”

“My father!” she interrupted him. “As he is the author of my being, I love and respect my father; but I deny his right to influence me in any matter which relates to my feelings and my affections. In so far as my resolution is concerned, my father’s opinions rather strengthen than weaken it. My father’s desire that I should wed you in this country, and not return to India, convinces me that I was right in imposing my chief ‘condition,’ that you must see me in the East.”

“Leonora! forgive me for what I have done—for enlisting the services of your father and of my mother. But, dearest, why could we not be fellow-passengers? About the time that you will be leaving England, I will also be leaving for India. Could it not—I am sure it could—be arranged? I am certain the Colonel would not object.”

“My father might not object, but *I* would object. Besides, what use would it be for us to journey to India in the same vessel?”

“I should see thee, dearest, day by day, and sit near thee, and talk to thee.”

“Indeed not, Augustus. You would not see me, or hear my voice, from the hour of my embarkation until you saw me in my own home. No one, save my servant, will see me on the voyage—not even my father.”

“Leonora! will you be a prisoner for that period?”

“Yes, a voluntary prisoner, Augustus. But during your voyage to India you shall have something to assist you in calling to mind my features. Here is a miniature.

The resemblance is exact, I believe." And taking from her waist a gold hunting-watch, she presented it to her lover. The portrait was in the back part of the case.

"It is wonderfully like," said Augustus, pressing it to his lips. "Wonderfully like! By whom was it taken, dearest?"

"By a native of India. By a man named Rooder Sein, a native of Lucknow."

"A black fellow?"

"Yes; he is black—very black; but he is a great artist, nevertheless."

"Will you accept my portrait, dear Leonora? It is an oil painting, taken some two years ago."

"Have you one?"

"No; but my mother has; and I am sure she will give it to you, if I ask her."

"Lady Mary has already given it to me, Augustus; and it will be the only face that I shall see during the voyage, except that of my old ayah, whom you have not yet seen, but whom you shall see in India."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BREAKING UP OF THE PARTY AT RECKLESS CASTLE.

LEONORA, on the third day of her visit to Reckless Castle, was summoned to town by the Colonel. He required her presence, he said. Miss West also received a letter from Miss Leardotte, expressing a hope that Miss West's stay would not be extended beyond Thursday. The General had written to Edgar to impress upon him the necessity of having his outfit ready as soon as pos-

sible; and this caution extended to Reckless, inasmuch as that gentleman had, immediately after his interview with Leonora, accepted the General's kind offer with many expressions of gratitude.

Sir Charles, who had not been to London for several months, and who had some business to transact there—something connected with hop-growing—proposed taking the ladies to town on the following day, Thursday, and depositing them at their respective abodes. Nor had Sir Charles any objection, he said, to allow Augustus and Mr. West to take a seat each on the box. This arrangement was agreed to at luncheon; but, in the course of the afternoon, Leonora had a meeting with Augustus in the shrubbery, and prevailed upon him to let their last farewell in England be at Reckless Castle.

"Let us walk to the Downs," said Leonora. "I have some directions to give to the people there about my horse, who is going back with us to India."

"What extraordinary people you are, to be sure!" said Reckless. --

"I have no doubt we appear so to you," said Leonora. "Yes; you shall see Ackbar in India. He is very old; but there is a great deal of life in him still."

"How old is he? He does not look an old horse."

"No; but he is older than you are. He is more than five or six-and-twenty."

"You are jesting?"

"I am not, indeed. My father has not raced horses for more than twenty-three years past, and Ackbar was one of his racing-stud. He was an old horse when I first knew him, and that is as far back as I can recollect—some ten or eleven years ago."

"Why, his teeth are as sound and as white as those of a colt."

"Yes; but how often do you see a very old man with white and sound teeth? Ackbar has a good constitution, and it has never been tampered with—never injured. The greatest care has always been taken of him. If I am tired when we get to the Downs, we will return on horseback, and you shall ride Ackbar. My father has often used him as a charger on field-days. He stands fire beautifully—just as well as any troop horse in the brigade."

Leonora was tired after her walk to the Downs, and while she was attiring herself in a riding-habit, Ackbar was saddled for Augustus, and Leonora's saddle placed upon the back of another animal. The old Arab was very fresh, and it was with great difficulty that Augustus, strong as he was in the arm, could prevent him from running away while he cantered along the road by the side of his beautiful companion.

"I hope we shall have many a ride together in India, Leonora," said Augustus, when they had reined in to give the horses a breathing-time.

"No, we will not ride together in India."

"Why not?"

"I always ride alone in India."

"But you will not object to ride *with me*?"

"Yes, I will object."

"Do you mean to say you have never ridden out with a gentleman in India?"

"Never!"

"Not even with the Colonel?"

"Never!"

"Do not ladies in India ride out with gentlemen?"

"Oh, yes."

Here was another mystery which poor Reckless could not solve.

* * * * *

While Reckless and Leonora were enjoying their ride, a very pathetic interview was taking place between West and Miss Reckless. But, notwithstanding the pathos, it partook vastly of the ridiculous, so great was the disparity of their personal proportions. They had contrived to meet in the library, at a time when Lady Mary was busied in her domestic affairs, Sir Charles in the fields, Miss West engaged in answering her letters, and the junior or middle branches of the Reckless family completing their studies for the day. They had at least an hour of uninterrupted discourse. There was an immense deal of sentiment, but not much of ardour, in little West's demeanour. In fact, he spoke much more like a middle-aged man dictating his last will and testament, than a lover about to part with his affianced bride. And Miss Reckless listened to him with an earnest and artless seriousness, and a vacancy of expression—(her beautiful mouth was half open, and her eyebrows elevated)—which would have satisfied the greatest sceptic in woman's truthfulness as to the scrupulousness with which she would attend to his every behest.

"If I should fall in the field of battle," said the little man, "or if the climate of India should destroy me——" (Here he paused and took her hand.)

"Yes," said Miss Reckless.

"Be assured that my last sigh on earth shall waft to heaven a hope that you may be happy, and that in another world we shall meet again. And should that happen—should it please the Great Disposer of Events

to will it so—I hope that, although you will fondly cherish me in your memory, you will not fail to bestow this hand upon any man who may be worthy of you, and may solicit it in marriage.”

“Yes,” said Miss Reckless, rather awed by West’s impressiveness, and not knowing exactly *what* she said.

“But if,” continued the little man, “I should survive—if I should do nothing to make me unworthy of you—I trust——” (he paused once more.)

“Surely you do not suppose I could ever love any one else?” said Miss Reckless, quietly.

“You shall hear from me by every mail,” resumed West; “but if, by any chance, I should not write to you, be assured that it will be owing to circumstances over which I had no control. And will you write to me, dear Mary?”

“Yes, Edgar; but what will be your address?”

“Dearest, place your letters under cover to the Right Honourable the Governor-General of India. They will then not only be sure to reach me, but reach me more speedily than if they were otherwise directed.”

There were footsteps and voices in the hall. Augustus and Leonora had returned; and West and Miss Reckless walked out of the library into the drawing-room, and looked and talked as though they had just been discoursing on the most indifferent topics imaginable.

* * * * *

On the following morning, when the carriage was drawn up at the door, Reckless, in obedience to the wishes of Leonora, excused himself from joining the party. They (Reckless and Leonora) had taken farewell of each other about an hour previously, and upon

either side many tears were naturally shed; for it is hard for those who love to part.

"I will follow you on horseback," said Reckless to Sir Charles.

"Very well," was Sir Charles's reply, for he seldom gave himself the trouble of inquiring of people the reason of their decisions. "Now then, post-boy, as soon as you please."

The carriage moved on. Reckless and his sister Mary stood upon the steps. The eyes of both were filled with tears. They watched the carriage till it was out of sight; and then Augustus, placing his arm affectionately around the waist of his sister, and leading her on to the lawn, looked into her face, and said, rather wildly, "It is a painful feeling—is it not, Mary?"

"What, Augustus?" said Miss Reckless.

"Love, dear Mary! But see, I have her likeness. Is it not the image of her? Only fancy, a black fellow did that—a black fellow, Mary! Why don't you take an interest in it? Ah! I know what's the matter, Mary. I told him it would happen. But never mind, dear girl, I'll take care of the little gentleman; he shall be all right. No harm shall come of him. We are going out together. I'll see to that—I'll protect him."

"Take care of the little gentleman? Protect him!" said Miss Reckless, half-proudly, half-contemptuously. "It is much more likely that he'll take care of and protect you, Augustus!"

"Dear Mary," said Reckless, tenderly, holding her in his firm embrace, "I did not mean to offend you."

"Perhaps not, dear Guss; but there is something very offensive in the constant allusions that you make to Mr. West's size. It would serve you right, if he were to retaliate."

"How retaliate, dear Mary? Am I little?"

"Not in body, Augustus; but *very* little in mind, notwithstanding your cleverness."

"How do you mean, Mary?"

"You have no fixed purpose. You weep and you laugh, you are serious and you're frivolous, by fits and starts, without knowing why—you have no fixed rule of action—you have no dependence on, nor confidence in, yourself—you cling to others for advice, and when they give you their advice you forget it, or do not heed it—you chatter like a magpie to comparative strangers on subjects which you ought to regard as sacred, and keep entirely to yourself—you ask everybody's opinion as to Leonora Ornsbie's beauty, as though you had your doubts on the subject, or as though she were a picture that you had bought at some gallery. It would not surprise me to hear that you had shown that portrait of Leonora to all the passengers on board the ship, and asked them what they thought of it; and then, not satisfied, that you had asked the stewards and other servants to look at it, in order that their approval might be pleasing to your vanity. Why do you blush, Augustus? Because I am telling you the truth? If I had been Leonora, I would have rejected you, long ago, for the littleness of your character. But love is blind, they say, and most probably she does not see it. You 'take care of the little gentleman, and protect him!' There is something so ridiculous in the idea, that I am very foolish to have suffered it to excite me to anger."

"Dearest Mary," said Augustus, soothingly, "do not be angry. Heaven knows, I did not intend to say one word that would vex you. I love all my brothers very much; but there is not one of them for whom I

have that peculiar affection that I have for West. My fortunes—my very being seems identified with his; and I pray Heaven that in a few years hence we may be more nearly connected than we now are.”

“Dear Augustus, in giving vent to my anger, I have calmed my grief,” said Miss Reckless, smiling.

“And, dear Mary,” replied Augustus, “in listening to your lecture, which I will not easily forget, but profit by, I hope mine has been very considerably diminished. By the way, Mary, what do you think of Miss West?”

“I love, esteem, and respect her.”

“Because she is Edgar’s sister?”

“No, Augustus; for her own good qualities.”

“She is not so handsome as Leonora.”

“You have profited very little from the lecture I read you just now.”

“She is in love. She confessed to me that she was. I wonder who is her swain?”

“That is another of your faults, Augustus—your unwarrantable curiosity as to the love affairs of other people. What can it signify to you?”

“A great deal; for if West did not know, I could tell him on the voyage out.”

“Of course; for you never could keep a secret. Whatever you know, you must tell to everybody, or to somebody.”

“Yes, it is very true; that is a failing of mine.”

“I happen to know the person, or rather the name of the person, with whom she is in love.”

“Let me hear it.”

“No; not at present. The time for disclosing it has not arrived. Do not make a plaything of that watch, Augustus; you will soon wear out the spring if you are constantly opening and shutting the case.”

CHAPTER XXX.

RECKLESS LEAVES HIS HOME FOR INDIA.

TWENTY-TWO days after the date of the doings mentioned in the last chapter, Augustus Reckless took leave of his father, mother, and the whole of his brothers and sisters. The lawyer, doctor, and divine had come from town for the purpose, to "see the young dragoon off." Reckless had made up his mind to be firm, and bear the parting manfully; and he certainly sustained himself wonderfully well until the moment came for him to receive the last kiss and the blessing of his mother. Here he gave way, and cried as bitterly as he used to cry when he was a boy of nine years of age, and was compelled to say "good-bye" to her on his return to school after the Christmas holidays. He was stupified with grief when Sir Charles—his own cheeks wet with tears—took his arm, and said, "Come, my boy," and led him into the hall. Here were assembled all the domestic servants, male and female, with each of whom Reckless shook hands, when they respectively prayed God to bless him.

The carriage was at the door, and the doctor, the lawyer, and the parson took their seats. Augustus then got in, gave Sir Charles's hand a convulsive grasp, released it, and had just voice enough to say "Farewell!" Outside the gates were assembled a number of the tenantry—farmers, tradespeople, and others. Some were on horseback, but the majority on foot. When the carriage came into the road, this crowd began to cheer and wave their hats.

"What an odd compliment!" exclaimed Reckless,

smiling through his tears; and, standing up, he returned the salute in their own fashion. "I should not wonder," said he, resuming his seat, and still smiling, "if they were to ring a merry peal on the church bells presently."

"There they go! You are right, Guss," said the lawyer, laughing; for the bells indeed had begun to ring. "And is it not something to rejoice at?—a gentleman going away to distinguish himself in his country's cause?"

"Of course it is," said Augustus.

"You feel better now, Guss?" said the doctor, smiling. "Let us feel your pulse."

"Perhaps you would like to bleed me?" said Reckless.

"No, Guss; but I am going to give you the means of bleeding other people. Here is my present to you on your departure." And the doctor took from his pocket a little leather case, about the size and shape of an ordinary cigar-case.

"Are there any in it?" said Augustus.

"Any what?" said the Doctor.

"Cigars?"

"Open it."

Augustus opened the box, and beheld a set of surgical instruments—a scalpel, two tiny saws, a lancet, several curved needles and thread, a probe, and some lint."

"Those things may be very useful, Guss," said the Doctor. "A skilful surgeon, with the instruments in that little box, could, on an emergency, do a great deal. He could remove a shattered limb even. I give myself a great deal of credit for having designed that little case of instruments."

"Very many thanks. I will always carry it about

with me if ever I go into a battle-field," said Augustus."

"And I have a present for you, Guss," said his clerical (or, as Reckless used to call him, his divine) brother; and he produced a little book, which might have been carried without any inconvenience in the waistcoat-pocket.

"What is it?—*The Little Warbler*, bound in velvet, with those eternal arms of ours upon it?" asked Reckless, with forced levity."

"No; it contains the Burial Service. You cannot give yourself Christian burial; but there may be times when you would desire to give it to others."

"Very kind of you," said Augustus. "And this, too, I will always carry about with me, if I should ever see a field of battle."

"And I have a present for you, Guss. Here it is—with the eternal arms upon it." And the lawyer drew forth a small silver flask, capable of holding about two ounces of liquid.

"Be careful how you unscrew the top, for it is filled," said the lawyer."

"With what?" said Augustus.

"Brandy."

"Is it good?"

"Yes; but do not taste it. I have to ask you not to expend one single drop of what that flask contains, except in cases of the very direst need."

"Well, I promise you that I won't," said Augustus. "But tell me, Charley—does brandy represent the law?"

"Not exactly, Guss. But I will tell you how I came to give you that. Sometimes, in a heavy case, when I feel greatly fatigued, instead of imbibing wine, or spirits

and water, or ale, or porter, as do some professional men, and judges sometimes, I take a few drops—say half a teaspoonful—of pure spirit, and I find it revives me wonderfully; and it struck me that there might be times when a few drops of that spirit might be the means of putting new life into you, or some friend of yours.”

“Why, the whole of these invaluable presents,” said Augustus, “I can carry in the breast-pocket of my undress jacket.”

* * * * *

It was half-past one when the carriage containing the four Recklesses arrived in town, at Prong's Hotel, where his luggage had been sent to previously. It was in his bed-room at the hotel that Augustus took leave of his brethren. They had scarcely taken their departure when there came a tapping at his door

“Come in,” said Reckless.

Mr. Brake, the head-waiter, made his appearance, dressed, as he always was, with scrupulous neatness, and bowing, as he always did, with a grace that George the Fourth might have envied.

“What's the matter, Brake?” said Augustus.

“The matter, sir, is simply this,” said Mr. Brake—“there is a gentleman in the coffee-room who wishes to speak to you.”

“Who is he? Hasn't he a card?”

“I asked him that question, and he said, ‘No, he had not his card-case with him.’”

“But has he not a name?”

“I also asked him for his name, sir, and he did mention a name; but at that moment some undergraduates from Oxford, who are breakfasting, talked rather loudly, and I did not catch it, and my pride

as well as my politeness would not permit me to put the question a second time."

"What is he like?—*is he* a gentleman?"

"Well, sir, appearances in the present day are so frightfully deceptive, and education, which often gives a good address, is so greatly on the spread, that it is hardly safe to pronounce a positive opinion; but in this case I think I may venture to state that he *is* a gentleman in that sense of the word which you employ, Mr. Reckless."

"Well, let him come in," said Reckless.

Mr. Brake left the room, and presently returned with the gentleman. It was John Chayworth, who had heard from little West that between one and two o'clock Reckless would be found at the hotel.

"Dear John!" exclaimed Reckless, "I am indeed glad to see you! Sit down; have some claret cup; it will be the last that we shall drink together for some time to come. We are off for Southampton this afternoon at half-past four; the vessel gets up her steam at midnight."

"So I have heard from West," said Chayworth. "He will be here presently; I left him an hour ago with his sister at a house in Park Lane."

"His sister?—Yes; by the way, is she not a magnificent girl? Who would have thought, eh, that West could be the brother of a girl like that?"

"She is a noble-looking girl, certainly," said Chayworth; "I never saw her before to-day."

"No?"

"No!"

"But you have written to her?"

"On one or two occasions. But how did you know that?"

"Then, by Jove, sir, you are the man! And the more I look at you, and compare you with the description, the more convinced am I of the fact."

"What do you mean? What are you talking about, Reckless?"

Here Augustus must needs detail unto Chayworth the conversation he had held with Miss West in the Lovers' Walk, at Reckless Castle.

Chayworth had always so much healthy colour in his face, that it would be hard to detect a blush on his countenance; but Reckless fancied that his friend's forehead became rather redder than usual. The reappearance of the waiter with the claret cup, however, prevented Reckless from saying more on that subject, for he was very thirsty; and, moreover, it was not his habit to dwell long upon any particular topic, save and except his own love affair.

"These are my traps," said Reckless, pointing to several black-leather portmanteaus, and an infinity of parcels strewed about the room in all directions.

"So I should have imagined," said Chayworth, drily. There was another rapping at the door.

"Come in!" said Reckless.

It was Captain West.

"Bless me!" exclaimed the little man, "have you not packed yet, Reckless?"

"No; there's lots of time," was the reply.

"Nothing of the kind; we have not one minute to spare. We must be at the Waterloo Bridge station at least a quarter of an hour before the General arrives, to receive him, and you will find we have several things to do."

"I wish you would not be such a fidget, West."

"I am not a fidget, Reckless; but I insist on our

being in time, without any hurry or flurry at the last moment."

"Take some cup, and be quiet."

"No; not till you have rung the bell for the boots to come and pack, and carry the portmanteaus into the hall. Just fancy, if we were late by ten minutes!"

"We would get a special train and overtake them."

"It is all very well to talk of special trains, but who's to pay for them? Besides, why run the risk? May I ring the bell for the boots?"

"Yes."

* * * * *

The portmanteaus were packed, and taken into the hall; the bill was made out, and paid; and to the servants, who had known Reckless—many of them for years—ever since he was a boy—for Sir Charles always stayed at that hotel when in town—he gave gratuities. Reckless then went into the little room on the right-hand side, bade the hostess, the host, and housekeeper adieu; took leave of John Chayworth, as did West, on the pavement; got into the cab that had been called ("in charge," as he expressed it, of his brother A.D.C.), and followed by another cab which carried his luggage, was driven to the terminus at Waterloo Bridge. Having paid their fare, and taken their tickets, they walked out on to the platform.

"Oh! here they are," said a voice well known to Edgar West's ears. It was the voice of General Ferret. The gentleman addressed was Mr. Cardin, Sir Edward's private secretary, to whom Reckless was, for the first time, introduced. West had met Mr. Cardin on previous occasions. The General, too, had come in a cab; and having (like West) a horror of being hurried at the last moment, was in very good time

—even more than in good time. He had declined the offer of the special train which had been placed at his disposal, and had paid his fare and taken his ticket like any other private gentleman. He had only one servant with him, a valet, who had charge of the luggage, and who also made himself, at the General's request, acquainted with the luggage of Mr. West and Mr. Reckless (or, as the General expressed it, "the luggage of *Captains West and Reckless*").

The General was attired in his usual habiliments—the old white hat, the blue coat with a velvet collar, the black trousers and waistcoat, and the drab cloth button boots.

The bell rang, and Sir Edward Ferret, followed by his private secretary and his aides-de-camp—Reckless and West—took his seat, and made himself comfortable. Just before the guard blew his whistle, the door of the carriage was opened, and another gentleman got in.

"There's not much room to spare," the stranger remarked to the company generally; "but enough, however!" He spoke in a loud, pompous, and self-satisfied air; and then, as if he had a desire to impress his hearers with the extent of his importance, he thrust his body half out of the carriage, and called out to the guard—

"Are you sure that my fellows have seen to my luggage? For go I must. The steam will be up at midnight."

"Steam up at midnight, sir?" said the guard, in a quiet and business-like tone of voice. "We are off now in a quarter of a minute. You are for Southampton?"

"Yes; and then for India."

"Well, you'll find it all right, I dare say, when we arrive, sir."

"I am going to the Dolphin Hotel!" said the stranger.

"Are you, indeed, sir?" said the guard, moving away; and in another moment the train was in motion.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DADDLEDAY BAHADOOR!

THE stranger who entered the carriage in which sat General Ferret and his staff—or, rather, that portion of it that was travelling with him—was a tall and rather portly personage, of about forty-five years of age. He had a very high forehead, but it had a stupid expression; a profusion of light hair; blue, but meaningless eyes; a long and reddish nose; and an enormous mouth. His mouth, in fact, was the greater part of his face. His bearing was arrogant in the extreme; and his manners, from their superciliousness, offensive to the last degree. He stared at the General and his staff as though they had been a parcel of card-sharpers; and he groaned and turned about in his seat as though he were cursing his hard fate for being thrown into such promiscuous company.

The General, who was an extremely kind-hearted man, was under the impression that the stranger's manner and uneasiness proceeded from a fear lest he should lose his passage; and in the hope that he might relieve

his mind on this head, the General remarked,—“Sir, we shall arrive at Southampton at seven o'clock; and if you are going to India by the steamer, which leaves at 12.50, you will have abundance of time to get on board.”

“Sir,” returned the stranger, “I know my own business; and I hope you know yours.” And here he looked at the other passengers for applause, under the impression that they were strangers to the General; and as they all smiled at his insolent remark, he fancied they approved of it. As for the General himself, he could not help laughing; and the stranger, concluding from this that he must be a very good-tempered old gentleman, condescended to talk to him.

“Get on board, sir?” he said. “Time to get on board? I *know* I have an abundance of time to get on board. But I have not an abundance of time to catch a certain person whom I wish to catch—no other than the Governor-General of India, sir.”

“God bless me!” exclaimed the General. “But which of them?—The one who is coming home?”

“No, sir; the one who is going out.”

“And what do you propose doing with him, sir, when you have caught him?” said the General. “You will not skin him, I hope?”

“No, sir; I wish merely to be the first, or to be one of the first—and there will be a rush for it—to have his ear.”

“What! to cut it off?” said Reckless.

“No, sir,” replied the stranger, with terrific pomposity. “When I say ‘to have his ear,’ I mean, to influence his judgment.”

“Oh! indeed?” said the General. “You have already been in India, sir?”

"Twenty years, sir; and I should have been there now, if it had not been for that wild animal that is coming home."

"A wild animal!" exclaimed West.

"A wild animal, sir! a maniac when he is in a passion. In a word, sir,—Lord Avalanche!"

"Is he really so bad?" inquired the General.

"Bad, sir?" the stranger echoed him. "Bad?—the word 'bad' but feebly expresses that man; but, thank Heaven, his reign is at an end. He removed me, without notice, from an appointment as opium agent at Batner; and sent a military man, sir, to take charge! I applied for leave to go to the Presidency; obtained it. Asked for an interview with Lord Avalanche; it was granted. Saw his lordship. 'What do you want?' said he, as soon as I entered the room. He did not rise from his chair—say, 'How do you do?'—'Sit down, sir,'—but at once put that offensive question, 'What do you want?'"

"An interview, my lord," said I, bowing very politely.

"Well, you have got it. What else do you want?"

"To explain, my lord."

"Explain what?"

"Several matters in the explanation which I sent in to the Government."

"What, sir! Explain an explanation? By —, sir, you ought to be a Director of the East India Company! If you like, I will give you a certificate that you are eminently qualified for the office."

"May I go home to England, my lord, and lay my case before the Court of Directors and the Board of Control?"

"Yes; or, for all I care, you may go and lay your case before the devil."

"What terrible language!" exclaimed the General, laughing, and raising his only hand. (The General knew Lord Avalanche intimately, and pictured to himself the scene which the stranger described; and while he contemplated the stranger, he made some allowance for the unseemly outbreak on the part of his lordship, his predecessor.)

"But that is nothing, sir," said the stranger. "Two nights after my interview with him, I went to a ball in Calcutta—a ball given at the Town-hall, in honour of his lordship."

"What! After he had told you to go to the devil?" said West. "I would have gone there only for the purpose of kicking him—yes, kicking him!"

"*You* kick him!" said the stranger. "He would make five of you." (Reckless laughed very loudly.)

"If he would make fifty of me—and he could not *one and a-half* of you, I should say, sir—I would have—ay, had he been as big as the giant whom David slew—I would have laid hands upon him, had he said to me what he said to you," replied West,

"And you would have been perfectly justified, sir," said the General to West, tapping his stump energetically, while the pupil of his beautiful blue eye dilated and flashed fire.

"Well, sir," said the stranger, "I knew my own business—I went to the ball. My object at present is to give some idea of the character of this man, Lord Avalanche." (The stranger was not aware of the fact, that in painting the characters of other people we involuntarily give them some insight into our own.) "I went to the ball, sir, in the hope that his lordship would see me—that I should catch his eye—and that, feeling he had been rude to me, he would, in that con-

vivial assembly, make some advance, and that I should still have an opportunity of talking to his lordship. But it did not happen. His lordship did not enter the ball-room till a quarter-past eleven, and then, with his hands in his breeches-pockets, he jostled himself through the deputation at the head of the stairs in such an abrupt and rude way that I saw there was no hope. His face looked very stormy. At twelve, the band played 'The Roast Beef of Old England,' and we all went to supper—an excellent supper, supplied by Mr. Spence, of Calcutta, at the cost of one gold mohur a head, wines included."

"How much is a gold mohur?" said the General.

"£1 12s., sir—that is to say, the Company's gold mohur,—siccas are £1 14s. 1½d. However, we went to supper; and when supper was over, Mr. Damsip, one of the Damsips, sir—one of the aristocracy of India——"

"Have you an aristocracy in India?" asked the General.

"Yes, sir," replied the stranger. "You have your Audleys, your De Roses, your Howards, and your Cavendishes, in England; and in India we have our Dowdens, our Damsips, our Dedmanstones, and our Daddledays. But that wild animal, Lord Avalanche, instead of recognising their rights, had positively the audacity to give them offence whenever it lay in his power. I have the honour to be a Daddleday."

"Indeed?" said the General.

"Lord Avalanche," continued the communicative stranger, "was all for the military—being himself a civilian, or rather an official—for he was not 'covenanted.' And it is to be hoped that the man who succeeds him, being a soldier, will be all for the civil service, and that the military will go to the wall, as they ought."

"Ah!" said the General, again striking his stump energetically, "I should not be at all surprised."

"But he is no statesman. Cannot be possessed of any administrative talents."

"Who?" said the General.

"The present man, Sir Edward Ferret, who is now going out. He is a soldier, sir; a good soldier, they say. And if he is a good soldier, how can he possibly have any administrative talents? The thing is impossible. Even the Great Duke was a failure as a statesman."

"Indeed?" said the General.

"The thing is impossible, sir. The man whom he succeeds has no talents of any sort or kind."

"Except a talent for abuse, sir, according to your account," suggested West.

"There you are right, sir. What do you suppose led to his recall? His abuse, sir. I have seen the despatch."

"What despatch, sir?" asked the General.

"The despatch that he would not condescend to answer; but sent back, sir, with pencil notes in the margin. And such notes! The Court of Directors asked his lordship if (as I am on this subject I will go on with it, and tell you about the ball afterwards)—the Court asked his lordship if the Law Commission, which was a great expense and of no use—except giving to a Macaulay or a Cameron £10,000 a-year—could not be abolished? His lordship writes in the margin, 'Yes—if you will send me out an Advocate-General instead of an ass.' That was a fling at the chairman, sir, who had appointed his own son, a young man of good abilities, though it is true he had never held a brief in his life. Then, sir, the Court wished to know

how certain departments were working, for his lordship had introduced some changes. Opposite to this paragraph he wrote—"It is enough to wear out the patience of a saint to be thus interrogated by a parcel of old women—and stupid old women into the bargain!" Opposite a very sensible suggestion, he wrote the word 'Nonsense!' To a recommendation, he said (in pencil), 'Bah!' to another, 'Stuff!' to another, 'My God!' to another, 'Absurd!'"

"Do you really believe that, sir?" said the General.

"Believe it, sir! I have *seen* the despatch, and read it," said Mr. Daddleday, energetically. "And now let me tell you about the ball, sir. At the supper, his lordship's health was proposed by Mr. Damsip, and was well received by both ladies and gentlemen. Up rose his lordship, and made a most violent speech, striking the table, and making the bottles and glasses dance again. He said that he had met with opposition; and that, by Heaven, he would beat down (those were his very words)—'beat down all opposition, no matter from what quarter it might come.' One lady, who sat near him, shrieked and fainted; another miscarried, sir, on the following morning; and a third (the wife of an attorney) went into hysterics, and could not be got out of them for several days afterwards."

"I thought you said he had no administrative talents," said Reckless. "It appears to me that he had."

"Ah! sir, it is not a subject for laughter," said Mr. Daddleday. "And then, look at the damage he did on the following morning, when he found his violent speech reported in the newspapers, with severe comments."

"What did he do then, sir?" asked the General.

"What did he do, sir?" said Daddleday. "Why,

he smashed the furniture, and with a black ebony ruler demolished a magnificent inkstand, foamed at the mouth, and bellowed like a mad bull. None of his staff nor any of his servants would go near him, sir."

Here the General, who had seen Lord Avalanche on several occasions in a violent passion, gave way to immoderate laughter, in which the other gentlemen joined. Daddleday, however, did not appreciate their mirth, and said as much, in rather uncouth terms.

"You must excuse my laughing," said the General, apologetically; "but such conduct on the part of a functionary in so lofty a position struck me as so very absurd. Allow me to hope, sir, that you will find in Lord Avalanche's successor a more temperate man, destitute as he may be of administrative talents."

"I hear that he is rather peppery at times," said Daddleday, "and as obstinate as a mule when he has once made up his mind, and not by any means insensible to flattery."

"Was that a weakness of his predecessor?" asked West.

"Not at all, sir; or rather it was not *safe* to flatter him. As a general rule, as I was afterwards told, it was very impolitic to be civil and obsequious with him. He once went so far as to tell one of the secretaries to the Government—no other than the celebrated Mr. Muligatawny—that his fulsome compliments made him quite sick and ill. My authority for that is the late General Worchill, who gave Lord Avalanche the name of the Brummagem Bonaparte. But to return to the present man. His weak point is the battle of Toddlebeera, where he did good service. Touch him there, and you have him, they say."

Again the General and his staff broke out into loud

laughter, and on this occasion Daddleday joined them. He thought he had made a good joke, and that they were enjoying it.

"I have been getting up the battle of Toddlebeera," said he, "and feel quite perfect in it."

"And prepared to let it off," said the General, with a smile. ••

"Quite so. He shall have a bit of it before dinner-time to-morrow, or my name is not what it is."

"And I hope it will give him an appetite," said Reckless—"act upon him as would a glass of sherry and bitters."

“Egad, sir!” exclaimed the stranger, “these great men—except that capricious madman, Lord Avalanche—have stomach for any amount of flattery. As Chesterfield truly says of women, ‘the largest quantity is not too much for them, and the smallest even is most gratefully received.’”

* * * * *

The train arrived, and Mr. Daddleday, of the Bengal Civil Service, got out of the carriage. In his haste to catch the Governor-General at the Dolphin Hotel, he omitted to say "good evening" to his fellow-passengers, but jumped into a cab, and was driven off at full speed, leaving his servant to follow him with his luggage.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE EMBARKATION OF SIR EDWARD FERRET AND HIS STAFF.

"HAS the Right Honourable the Governor-General of India arrived in Southampton?" Mr. Daddleday, almost breathless with anxiety, inquired of the landlord of the Dolphin Hotel.

"No, sir," was the reply.

"What can be the meaning of that?"

"I can't say, sir. We hear that his Excellency will come by a special train at ten o'clock, and proceed on board the *Hindoostan* at once."

"Ah!" said Mr. Daddleday. "Well, I will dine, and then return to the station to meet his Excellency. Are there many passengers, do you know, going out in the vessel?"

"A great many, sir. You see, it is considered a great thing to go in the same ship with the Governor-General. In the first place, there are no delays; in the next place, the passengers make the acquaintance of his lordship previous to his arrival in the land that he is going to govern. And that is considered something."

"I see," said Mr. Daddleday; "I see. But that is a matter that does not weigh much with me; indeed, not at all. I consider it a nuisance, rather, to sail with a Governor-General—his presence imposes such a restraint on the company."

"So I should think, sir," said the landlord.

Meanwhile, Sir Edward Ferret and his staff were settling themselves in their cabins. Sir Edward had a quarter-gallery cabin on the right-hand side of the saloon, Reckless and West occupied that immediately

opposite, and Mr. Cardin the cabin adjoining. They were all hungry, and enjoyed extremely the extemporaneous refreshment, in the shape of dinner, which the purser very quietly ordered for them—some cold fowl, ham, pickles, bread, and bottled ale.

When the passengers began to flock on board, Sir Edward Ferret retired to his couch, and ere long fell into a profound slumber. He had not slept much for several nights, and was heartily glad that he was embarked. Reckless, West, and Mr. Cardin, who were all very much fatigued, soon followed Sir Edward's example, and by half-past ten were fast asleep—so fast asleep, indeed, that they did not hear Mr. Daddleday, who had a cabin in the saloon, and who was talking in his loud voice, and disputing with the officer of the watch.

"Are you quite sure that the Governor-General is on board?" he asked.

"Yes," said the officer of the watch; "you don't suppose we would leave him behind, do you? Aboard? Yes. Came on board at half-past seven, took something to eat and drink—all standing—and turned in at 9.25."

"Which is his cabin?" inquired Mr. Daddleday.

"That," said the officer of the watch, pointing to the door.

"Why, it is next to mine!" said Mr. Daddleday. "How fortunate! Why, I shall be able to hear him snore

It is needless, perhaps, to inform the reader that Mr. Daddleday was one of the greatest sycophants in the service to which he belonged. Lord 'Avalanche' (quoting Swift) had very truly said of him that he was—

A man in meanness so immersed,
He truckled most when treated worst.

"Don't make a noise in your cabin and wake him," said the officer of the watch; "he seemed rather knocked up."

"I would not wake him for a kingdom," said Mr. Daddleday, creeping on tip-toe to his cabin.

To the very minute appointed for her departure, the *Hindoostan* steamed away from her moorings. As soon as she was well clear of the shipping in the port, the captain, whose name was Sillock—a short, fat, round-faced man, with intensely red hair and whiskers—gave two orders; the first, which was conveyed to the engine-room, was uttered in a voice that might have been heard a mile off. It was this—

"FULL SPEED!"

The second order was spoken in a very quiet voice to the pilot—"Keep her off the ground, old boy. False keels are precious. I don't want to be suspended again—round the middle, like a monkey."

"All right, sir," said the pilot.

It was a bright moonlight night; the wind was dead against the ship, and it blew a stiff breeze, but she contrived to move through the water at the rate of ten miles an hour.

After parting with the pilot the wind increased, and by seven o'clock the next morning it blew a steady gale. The ship, nevertheless, did her eight knots; but every now and then she pitched awfully. The consequence was, that very few of the passengers made their appearance at the breakfast-table. As for Mr. Daddleday, who was a very bad sailor, he was frightfully ill; and to the horrors of sea-sickness was added the horror that some other civilian might be getting hold of the Governor-General's ear, and perhaps fore-

stalling him in the matter of the battle of Toddlebeera. He made several desperate attempts to get up, but without avail. Nature had thrown him on his flat broad back, and kept him there.

The General, who was not sick (nor was Reckless or West), after breakfast walked about the decks, talked to every one whom he met, made himself very agreeable, and appeared to be extremely happy. It was not until the fourth day that Mr. Daddleday "showed" on deck, and even then he felt very shaky and nervous. The steward, who waited upon him, saw him to an arm-chair near the mizen-mast, wrapped his cloak about him, and there left him. The air did Mr. Daddleday a great deal of good; it revived him, and he was well enough to talk in his loud Cutcherry* voice. The Admiralty agent, Lieut. Harker, R.N., who had met Mr. Daddleday in Calcutta, went and spoke to him, and expressed his gladness to see him up again.

"Thank you. Yes! I am decidedly better," said Mr. Daddleday, in the most patronizing tone conceivable. Harker, who had been for several years the first lieutenant of a frigate, was himself rather pompous and dictatorial in his style; but near Mr. Daddleday, of the Bengal Civil Service, and in comparison with him, Harker was positively a very meek man.

There were numbers of ladies and gentlemen walking about the deck, for the weather was now warm and fine; and Mr. Daddleday was very anxious to see the Right Honourable the Governor-General. He did not like to inquire, however, and therefore sat guessing, he eyed furtively first one stranger and then another.

* Cutcherry—an Indian court of justice.

There was a middle-sized and rather elderly gentleman on board, who was going out to China to wind up the affairs of a large mercantile house. This gentleman had a good deal of consequence about him, talked in a very positive manner, and was usually listened to with a great deal of attention; for he was a very clever man, extremely well-informed and well-educated, and had a very extensive stock of anecdotes to suit all tastes. When Mr. Daddleday first saw this elderly gentleman walking the quarter-deck—with a firm tread, and a rather military bearing—between two military men (captains), who were going out to join their respective regiments at Madras and Ceylon, he (Mr. Daddleday) made up his mind that *that* was the Governor-General, and the two military men a part of his staff. In some respects the elderly merchant resembled Sir Edward Ferret; he had very grey hair, very blue eyes, and a compact figure. “Yes; that must be him!” said Mr. Daddleday to himself; and he kept his eyes very reverently on the trio, and tried to catch the words that were falling from the merchant’s lips. At this moment Reckless passed close to where Mr. Daddleday was sitting. Mr. Daddleday saw and recognised Reckless, but he did not speak to him. He merely said to himself, “Holloa! there is one of the railway passengers. A young planter going to Ceylon, I dare say. I don’t like that young man; he is too forward. Tries to be witty. And, dear me, there’s the little man with the white hat! What can he be going out for? To join Hamiltons, the jewellers, perhaps; he is not unlike one of that firm.” (At this time the General was talking with the Captain.) “And, as I live, there is that diminutive creature, who has impudence enough for half-a-dozen men!”

Presently Sir Edward Ferret moved away from the Captain, and went forward to gossip with some one else ; and the Captain, observing Mr. Daddleday on deck for the first time, went and congratulated him on the event.

"By the way, Captain Sillock," said Mr. Daddleday, "who is that little man with the white hat?"

"Don't you know?" asked the Captain, who was rather fond—indeed, *very* fond—of a joke.

"No. I came down in the train with him from London, and we talked together; but I have no idea who or what he is."

"He is going out to set up a coach manufactory in Calcutta—to undersell Dykes and Co., and Stewart and Co.," said the Captain.

"I am very glad of it," said Mr. Daddleday. "We want opposition. And those young men who are with him are his assistants, I suppose?"

"Precisely so; they *are* to assist him."

"Humph!"

"He is a very intelligent little man?"

"Oh, very, Captain Sillock—at least he appears to be so—and rather respectful in his manners; but as for those younger ones, they will never do. Good Heaven! sir, instead of keeping their proper distance, and listening, they talk as though they were your equal—the tall one especially."

"Yes; he wants a good deal of curbing," said the Captain, stealthily laughing while he spoke.

"He seems very hale, and in good spirits," said Mr. Daddleday, looking and nodding his head towards the group on the quarter-deck.

"Who do you mean?" said the Captain.

"His Ex—the G.-G.," said Mr. Daddleday.

"Oh! yes," said the Captain, instantly perceiving the error into which the pompous civilian had fallen. "Very good spirits, indeed. Have you spoken to him?"

"Not yet; but I shall take an opportunity of doing so before long."

"You ought; for he has been making very many inquiries after you."

"After *me*?"

"Yes; he knows that you are on board, and that you have been very ill—sea-sick—and would have come to see you if the doctor had not told him it would be impolitic."

"How could he know that I was on board?"

"Some friend of yours told him that you were going out in the same ship, no doubt; for as soon as he came on board, he inquired for Mr. Daddleday. Here he comes."

When the elderly merchant approached the Captain, for the purpose of asking him a question about the ship's position at noon, Mr. Daddleday, weak as he was, rose from his chair, took off his hat, and made a very abject bow.

The merchant returned the salute, and said in a very kind tone of voice, "You appear to have suffered very much, sir."

"Very much indeed, your Excellency," said Mr. Daddleday; "but the kind inquiries which your Excellency made, and of which I have just been informed, was an act of kindness and condescension which I shall never forget so long as I live, your Excellency."

Here the Captain, who was dying to laugh, moved away. The elderly merchant, under the impression that Mr. Daddleday's mind had been affected by his

severe sea-sickness, begged him to be seated, took a chair near him, and listened to all Mr. Daddleday had to say, soothing him the while with kind and gentle replies.

"Those splendid administrative talents, Sir Edward" (it was thus the pompous sycophant ran on), "for which you are as world-renowned as for your glorious achievement at the ever-memorable battle of Toddlebeera——"

"Yes," said the merchant.

"For a man—a soldier possessed of those splendid administrative talents—India, since the days of Clive, has been pining——"

"Yes," said the merchant.

"Long since, have the services in India—both services—said, 'Give us a man like Sir Edward Ferret—give us a man whose name shines brightly in the page of history.'"

"Yes, and now you have him; and that ought to satisfy you——"

"And it does satisfy us, your Excellency."

"Yes; well, I would not excite myself. You require rest, and perfect calm, after so severe an attack. Be influenced by my advice. Do now——"

"I *will*, Sir Edward. If you were to advise me to leap into the ocean, I would do so."

"I wont advise you to do that," said the merchant; "but compose yourself. Be calm."

"I don't feel ill *now*," said Mr Daddleday (nor was he ill); "I feel that I am myself again. I hope I did not in any way disturb your Excellency during my illness. As our cabins are adjoining, I was sometimes fearful lest I should do so; and struggled very hard to be as quiet as the circumstances would admit of, your Excellency."

"You did not disturb me at all, sir," said the merchant, who would not contradict any statement of Mr. Daddleday's; "not at all, I assure you. I never once heard you."

At this moment Sir Edward Ferret himself approached Mr. Daddleday, and was about to speak to him; but the pompous civilian waved him off with a *brusque* bow, saying, "Not now, sir, when you see me talking to the Governor-General of India." Then, turning to the merchant, Mr. Daddleday remarked, "The impudence of some of these Calcutta tradesmen, Sir Edward, is beyond belief; and if I might venture, on the ground of my experience, which extends over twenty years, I would give your Excellency a hint, that you cannot keep these people, even on board ship, at too great a distance. Now, the bare idea, Sir Edward, of that man—a coach-builder——"

"Yes," said the merchant, who was now compelled to laugh, much as he tried to be very grave—"Yes, it is provoking, no doubt; but it is hardly worth while to distress oneself. You will excuse me for a few moments; we will talk again together by-and-bye. Be quiet, calm, and enjoy the fresh air without fatiguing yourself." And with these words the merchant left Mr. Daddleday's side, and sought the Captain, whom he found with Reckless and West. They were all screaming with laughter, the tears running down the Captain's red face; the Captain was communicating to the aides-de-camp, in the saloon, the particulars of his conversation with Mr. Daddleday, and they were detailing to the Captain the particulars of the journey from London to Southampton. As the reader will readily imagine, when the merchant came to tell *his* story, the laughter, if possible, became even more boisterous.

"I thought he was insane," said the merchant, "and humoured him. I allowed him to talk to me about my administrative talents, and the battle of Toddlebeera, as though I was really the man in his mind. But as he is not mad, I think it would be only right for me to return to him, and inform him of his error."

"I think I ought to do that, as I have been a party to his mistake," said the Captain; "but suppose we all go and set him right." And with this intention the merchant, the Captain, Reckless, and West walked to the lee of the mizen-mast, where Mr. Daddleday was seated.

When he was perfectly satisfied that "the little man in the white hat" was Sir Edward Ferret, Daddleday closed his eyes, and his head fell upon his chest. "I am a lost, a ruined man!" said he.

"Not at all," said Reckless; "Sir Edward says he is under very great obligations to you for having put him—no matter how unwittingly—on his guard about the battle of Toddlebeera."

"Oh, Heaven! Do not mention it!" said Daddleday.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE VOYAGE TO INDIA.

SIR EDWARD FERRET of course "forgave" Mr. Daddleday; but the latter was extremely subdued during the passage. He conquered, or affected to conquer, his repugnance to Reckless and West, and thought them (so he said) "two of the most gentlemanlike

young men he had ever met in the whole course of his life." It was "quite a luxury to be in their company." He likewise detected in Mr. Cardin, the private secretary, talents of the highest order. Daddleday was to great a wretch to be hated. In the excess of their contempt for him, there sprung up in the breasts of the three members of the staff something of pity for him; and yet it was evident to them that, with all persons subject to his authority, Daddleday would be an arrogant bully and blusterer. He had cancelled the remainder of his leave, in order that he might sail with the Governor-General, and "catch his ear;" and here was the result. Instead of making himself a person of weight with the Governor-General, of which he would be able to boast—for Daddleday was a boaster—he was literally an object of commiseration, and the standing joke of the ship; for his mistake became known to every soul on board, and caused as much laughter in the pantry, and even in the fore-part of the vessel, where the sailors lived, as in the saloon.

"Are there many of that stamp in India?" Reckless, one day inquired of an officer of the Bengal Cavalry—Captain Binfield—when they were talking of Daddleday.

"He is an extreme case, certainly," said Captain Binfield; "but you will meet many quite as bad as this—fellows who would black your boots as long as you are on the staff of the Governor-General, but who would cut you dead and treat you with disdain the moment you were ordered to join your regiment."

"Is it possible?" said Reckless. "But this fellow told us when we were coming from town, in the carriage with him, that he was one of the aristocracy of India."

"And so he is; that is to say, he belongs to one of those families who monopolize all the best appointments. They are all connected one with the other by blood or by marriage. It was a hard time for many of them, however, when Lord Avalanche came out to govern the country. He stripped numbers of them of their overpaid appointments, or cut their pay; and insulted them as well, by scoffingly calling them Leadenhall-street shahzadahs (princes)."

"Lord Avalanche appears to have had a rather rough tongue," said Reckless.

"And perhaps he had," said Captain Binfield; "but military men think him the best Governor-General ever sent to India. It may be because he proclaimed that doctrine—'*It was by the sword that we gained India—it is by the sword that we must hold it!*'"

"I am shamefully ignorant of Indian politics," said Reckless. "Have you been many years in India, Captain Binfield?"

"Twenty-seven; and am now only the junior Captain of my regiment."

"Did you ever meet a Colonel Ornsbie?"

"Paul Ornsbie, of the Horse Artillery?"

"Yes."

"I know him very intimately. Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"He is very rich. Some people say he is worth forty-five lacs of rupees—£250,000."

"Indeed?"

"A very eccentric person is the Colonel. When I met him, he was in the Foot Artillery, and had command of a battery at Nusseerabad."

"Did you know his family?"

"No; but I have always understood that he was a man of very good family."

"I mean his family in India?"

"He never had any, that I am aware of."

"Oh, yes; he has a daughter. They were staying down in that part of the country where my people live, and we saw a great deal of them."

"I never heard of Colonel Ornsbie having a daughter. Was she dark?"

"No; fairer than any lady on board this ship, and very beautiful. Perhaps it is not the same man."

"There is only one Paul Ornsbie in India, and he is a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Horse Artillery."

"The Colonel Ornsbie I mean was a great sporting man at one period of his life—owned race-horses."

"The same—owned the celebrated Ackbar."

"That is the man, sir."

"Well, I am positive he had no family. He is an old bachelor."

"Are you quite sure?"

"I have been quartered half-a-dozen times at the same station with Colonel Ornsbie, and even so recently as the year before last, at Meerut, where he owns a magnificent property, with a large house upon it, where he lived, as he always has lived, like a hermit or a miser. No one ever dined or breakfasted with him in his own house. They say that out of his pay of fourteen hundred rupees a month, he does not spend one hundred and fifty."

"There must be some mistake."

"Not upon my part. But yonder is a man ~~smoking~~ his cigar who knows more of Ornsbie than I do, even. He is now a Brevet Major, but was once a Lieutenant

in the troop that Ornsbie commanded. Shall I call him?"

"Do call him, please."

Captain Binfield called out "Cheywyn!"

The officer thus addressed turned round, and approached Captain Binfield and Reckless.

"You know Paul Ornsbie, Cheywyn?" said Captain Binfield.

"I should think so," was the reply.

"Did you ever hear of his having any family?"

"Never."

"Captain Reckless says he has seen a daughter of his—a fair and handsome girl."

"He had some nieces; at least, so I have heard; but they were never in Bengal. The Colonel had a younger brother, who was in the Civil Service, in the Madras Presidency."

"It is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of in the whole course of my life," said Reckless.

"Colonel Ornsbie is now in England," said Major Cheywyn, "and is coming out by the next steamer. I saw him at the India House not more than ten days ago, and he told me he had engaged his passage."

"Yes; and his daughter is coming with him," said Reckless.

"How old is she?" asked Captain Binfield.

"About eighteen," said Reckless.

"Let me see," said Major Cheywyn, musing and calculating—"Eighteen years ago the Colonel was—where? Oh, he was in Staff employ. He was acting, for a time, as Governor-General's agent in Ajmere; but a year afterwards he was again doing regimental duty, and came up to Mattra. He had no family then; and ever since that time I have known him as well as most men, and never

heard him speak of, or in any way allude to, a family."

"I am still under the impression that there is some mistake," said Reckless. And without knowing exactly what he was doing, he took out his watch, and looked at Leonora's likeness.

"I should not mind being a son-in-law of old Ornsbie," said Binfield, "if he would endow me with his shares in the Agra Bank."

Reckless became terrifically perplexed and uncomfortable. He retired to his cabin, threw himself upon his bed, and gave himself up to the most melancholy reflections.

Presently West entered the cabin for the purpose of dressing for dinner, and inquired of his friend if he were not going to do the like.

"No," said Reckless; "I cannot eat to-day. West, would you believe it?"

"What?"

"Leonora is a myth, after all."

"A myth, Reckless! Are you mad? Have I not seen Leonora?"

"You have seen somebody—Heaven knows whom. But Colonel Ornsbie has no daughter!" And here the distracted lover detailed the conversation he had had with Captain Binfield and Major Cheywyn.

"It is strange, certainly," said West. "But if I were you, I would be patient."

"Patient, West! patient! How can a man be patient under such circumstances? I have been duped, fooled, tricked, trifled with, and humbugged! It is all a dream, sir; and I am not quite sure that I am now awake. But I know what I will do: I will force her

in making love in earnest to that Mrs. North who sits near me at dinner."

"Then you had better dress, and come to the table," said West. "But I think you are very foolish not to wait a little, till you are perfectly satisfied that you have been fooled."

"I am perfectly satisfied," said Reckless; "and I will dress, and come to table."

* * * * *

Mrs. North, the wife of an old civilian, a judge of the High Court of Appeal in Calcutta, was a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired, fair-complexioned lady, of about twenty-five years of age. Mr. North, her husband, was at least sixty-five or seventy. She had never any regard for the old man, and had married him because her father, who was also an old civilian, had insisted upon her doing so. She was not a pretty woman, but far from ill-looking; and there was some fascination in her manners, notwithstanding they were frivolous. As for intellect, Mrs. North had but very little; but she had an immense quantity of small talk, which with many persons passed current for ability. She had been to England "for the benefit of her health" ostensibly; but rumour had it that her departure from India was brought about by a violent quarrel with old Mr. North, and that she was now going back only because he had cut off the allowance he had made her for the past two years, of £1000 per annum.

Mrs. North was charmed with the manners of Augustus Reckless, and had received the ordinary attentions he had hitherto paid her with something approaching to avidity, exhibiting at the same time an appetite for "more." But up to the present moment Reckless

had been extremely discreet, and utterly devoted to the memory of Leonora, of whom he thought all day, and dreamt of at night.

Mrs. North, who was a notorious flirt in India, might have selected one of half-a-dozen officers who were all ready to become her *cavaliers suivant*; but she had reserved herself, in the hope that Reckless, by degrees, would get rid of his shyness (for to shyness she attributed his apparent want of sympathy), and, before the voyage was over, would have him at her feet. What was her joy to find, on the day in question, such a decided change in the manners of the young and handsome A.D.C. She could not, or she would not, observe that his admiration was forced, strained, unnatural, and sprang from anything but affection.

They were now in the Mediterranean; and, after dinner, Reckless, instead of remaining, as was his wont, to drink wine at the table, went upon deck and walked with Mrs. North. He led her to the fore-part of the vessel, and looked over the bows with her, and admired the snow-white spray and the dark-blue water. He then lingered with her near the sheep-pens and the hen-coops; and then, at Mrs. North's request, he took her on to the bridge which connected the paddle-boxes. From this eminence she had the satisfaction of beholding the ladies on the after-part of the deck, and of saying to herself—"Yes; look. This gentleman is another conquest of mine!" And when the evening closed in, Reckless was still by the side of Mrs. North, and remained with her until half-past nine o'clock, when she, with the other ladies on board, retired for the night.

On the following day this flirtation was renewed much to the dissatisfaction of West, who was not only annoyed that Reckless should exhibit so little principle

in matters connected with the heart, but that he should make himself conspicuous and become talked about in every quarter of the ship. Even Sir Edward Ferret could not help observing to the private secretary, with a smile, that his A.D.C. had gone upon another staff entirely. The ladies on board the *Hindoostan* were excessively indignant (at least those who did not flirt themselves) at this "flagrant case," as they were pleased to term it; and several spoke so loudly on the subject, that Sir Edward could not help hearing their remarks, and was disposed to speak to his A.D.C. in a quiet and good-tempered way on the first favourable opportunity. Such opportunity soon occurred. On the vessel arriving at Malta, and when she was coaling, Sir Edward and his staff, and a number of gentlemen and ladies, went on shore. Reckless instantly paired off with Mrs. North, hired a carriage, and drove out to St. Paul's Bay and Civita Vecchia. They had but a few hours to spend on the island, for three P.M. was the time fixed for their departure. But what with looking at the catacombs, and the chapel, and the old (?) coins which the little Maltese boys offered for sale, and the time spent in partaking of refreshment (oranges principally), it was nearly a quarter to three before they commenced their return, and, in consequence, they did not arrive at Valetta until a quarter to four.

Luckily for Reckless, he was an immense favourite with Lieut. Harker, the Admiralty agent, as well as with the Captain; and the former, therefore, made several excuses for delaying the ship for a short time. His patience, however, was beginning to be exhausted, and he was just on the point of saying, "Well, we must go," when Reckless and the lady were observed getting into a boat, and coming off to the ship. Sir Edward

was excessively annoyed, and exhibited his feelings in his features when the pair came upon the deck of the vessel. As for West, he was "quite shocked," he said. Reckless, however, did not take these demonstrations much to heart; nor did Mrs. North seem to care much, or anything, about the scowls with which the other ladies contemplated her on her rejoining them. She had seen St. Paul's Bay, and the cave in which he preached, and other famous places; and she was not only perfectly satisfied, but *looked* so. Sir Edward "spoke" to Reckless rather seriously, but not in an angry humour. He merely pointed out to him how unpleasant it was to himself that the vessel should be delayed in consequence of one of his staff, and that he hoped that, for the remainder of the voyage, his attentions to Mrs. North (here the General smiled, and tapped his stump) would be such as not to excite either the envy or the wrath of the other ladies. "I am sadly afraid," continued the General, "that the standard of morality is not particularly high in India; for I cannot help observing that there are several other pairs in as much disgrace as yourselves. There's Captain Binfield and the little woman, who is, I am told, the wife of a Presidency surgeon; and there is that young civilian and the wife of a gentleman who is, they tell me, a Calcutta merchant."

"These flirtations are perfectly harmless, Sir Edward," said Reckless; "simply for passing away the time."

"They are not harmless, exactly—on shipboard," replied the General, "because they give rise to unpleasant remarks and reflections, which, so far as your case is concerned, are peculiarly disagreeable to me, seeing that you are on my staff. And I wish you to promise me that you will attend to what I have said to you."

"I will, sir," said Reckless, frankly. And to a great extent he kept his word, and showed Mrs. North much less attention than previously—in fact, very little attention at all. This, however, must have been upon an understanding with the lady; for on arriving at Alexandria, they again paired off, and, after visiting Pompey's Pillar and Cleopatra's Needle, they must needs drive out to see a palace, and returned only just in time to embark with the rest of the party on board the steamboat which was to take them up the Nile. Of this, however, the General did not feel justified in taking any notice, but West did. He lectured his friend at great length, and reproached him severely for not having written a single letter to his family or to Leonora.

"How often am I to tell you," said Reckless, "that that girl has duped and deceived me? And so has that old father of hers, and that native—that Baboo. She trifled with me. My belief is that she is not old Ornsbie's daughter, but that she stands in some other relation to him. Binfield and Cheywyn both hinted that such must be the case."

"Binfield and Cheywyn! Bah!" cried the little man. "The shallowest suggestions, no matter from whom they come, appear to fire your imagination, and afford you some excuse for being unfaithful to your vows."

"You wrong me, West."

"I do not, Reckless."

"How can you reconcile Leonora's conduct, in calling herself the daughter of Colonel Ornsbie, when here are witnesses who can prove most positively that she is not?"

"They can prove nothing of the kind. All they can prove is, that they did not know Colonel Ornsbie had a daughter."

“Well, that amounts to the same thing, when you come to reflect that in India everybody knows the other’s affairs. I am quite astonished to hear how they talk sometimes. They seem to know exactly what are the circumstances of everybody—who has saved money, who are in debt, who are married, whom they married, how many children they have got, what their names are. In a word, West, it seems to me that the Europeans in India are as one vast family, scattered over an immense territory.”

“It may be so, Reckless, but——”

“Halloa! where is my watch?” exclaimed Reckless, suddenly, and becoming pale. “I had it when we were driving to the palace, for I looked at it to know the time!”

“You cannot surely have lost it? It was attached to a chain; and out of England there are no pick-pockets—brutes who steal from the person.”

“I am afraid it has gone, West. I would not have lost it for the world, although it was *her* gift to me.”

“Could you value a gift after you had ceased to value the giver?”

“Yes; I valued it because it called to mind—brought before me—the face of one whom I could still admire, though I have ceased to love her!”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE VOYAGE CONTINUED.—ARRIVING AT CALCUTTA.

FOR fifty hours, the time that it took to reach Cairo, Augustus Reckless was greatly³ provoked at the loss of the watch which Leonora had given to him. But in escorting Mrs. North to see the Turkish bazaar, the spot where Mehemet Ali caused the Mamelukes to be butchered, and other "lions" of the ancient city, he ceased to think any further of the misfortune.

By the way, at Cairo, Mr. Daddleday, who had spent a fortnight there on his way home, offered very meekly to become the Governor-General's *cicerone*—an offer which the Governor-General considerably accepted. Alas! had it not been that he had made such a fool of himself in the railway carriage, and subsequently, what an opportunity would he have had here of catching his Excellency's ear, by baiting his hook with the battle of Toddlebeera! For his Excellency was not a little surprised, as well as mortified, to find how firm a footing the French had got at Cairo, as well as at Alexandria—the great gates to our dominions in the East—the land which he was going out to govern. None of the native shopkeepers in the bazaars could speak a word of English; but many of them could hold a conversation in French. They had no English snuff, but they had French snuff. In fact, all the European articles of commerce were French—except the false "antiques," which were of Birmingham manufacture, and shipped at so much per ton. But no! Poor Daddleday had "killed his pig," and there was no putting new life into it.

Sir Edward smiled upon him very graciously, but Daddleday could not detect any prospect of promotion in that smile. There was no "Resident at Lucknow," or Nagpore, or Indore, or Nepaul (appointments which Daddleday had dreamt of frequently, after he had made up his mind to cancel his leave, for the purpose of going out with the Governor-General in the *Hindoostan*), wrapped up in the thanks which Sir Edward expressed to Mr. Daddleday. No! There was nothing but bare tolerance, mixed with pity, in the glances of that bright blue eye of Sir Edward's. And these—though they were better than no notice at all, in Daddleday's estimation—were almost as profitless and as unsatisfactory as Lord Avalanche's "What do you want?"

When Reckless told Mr. Daddleday that Sir Edward said he felt under great obligations to him for being put upon his guard, Reckless spoke the truth; for Sir Edward had made himself "proof" against several who had tried the Toddlebeera, as well as "the portrait, business," as Reckless used to call it. Several had each bought a portrait of Sir Edward—an engraving of a picture taken in 1818—and these were hung up by their owners, respectively, in their cabins in the saloon, taking care that the door should frequently be left open, so that the Governor-General, when passing, might catch a glimpse of himself. But, inasmuch as sycophants—like Jew dealers in old clothes, and proprietors of omnibuses—must needs oppose each other, the effect was nothing. Indeed, instead of being touched by "this flattering attention," Sir Edward only laughed at it.

In respect to this "picture business," Mrs. North took an opportunity of saying to a lady—a Mrs. Sly

(the wife of Sly of the Civil Service, and Judge of Kollipore, who had instigated his wife to carry the engraving in her own hand, from the Nile boat to Shepherd's Hotel, in order that the Governor-General might glean how highly they prized it)—“You do not know what harm that may do you, my dear.” (Mrs. North hated Mrs. Sly, and was hated in return.)

“Why? How do you mean?” said Mrs. Sly.

“One of Sir Edward's staff” (she did not say Reckless) “told me that Sir Edward thought that print so unlike him, and so vulgar a picture, that it put him into a furious passion whenever his eye caught sight of it.”

“Lord!” exclaimed Sly, fully crediting Mrs. North's statement, when she gave up her authority—“I am very much obliged to you, Mrs. North, for the information.” And in order that there should be no chance of the Governor-General's sight being again offended by the picture, he presented it to Mr. Shepherd, the proprietor of the hotel, who gave it to Reckless (as a particular favour), who gave it to Mrs. North, who suspended it in her cabin as soon as she embarked at Suez.

Mrs. North, though deficient in ability, had an immense faculty for mischief, and could say all sorts of unpleasant things with the most gracious smiles imaginable. Her statement to Sly, as to the unpopularity of the picture with the Governor-General, was purely an invention of her own.

At Suez, at Aden, at Ceylon,—wherever the vessel stayed to coal, and the passengers went on shore,—was Reckless to be seen escorting Mrs. North; but on board he almost held aloof from her; and since the day that Sir Edward had spoken to him—the day they left Malta

—he had taken his seat at the other end of the dinner-table, and twenty paces distant from where Mrs. North sat.

. * * * *

It was a frightfully hot day, that on which the Governor-General, Sir Edward Ferret, landed in India. All the officials of every degree, the Bar, the ministers of the Church, congregated on the steps of the Government House to receive him. On his entering the gate they all took off their hats, and several of them had strokes of the sun; and one gentleman, a clergyman, died of one. Sir Edward wore his eternal white hat, and blue coat, &c.; but his staff were in full-dress uniform. (He had been met at the Ghat (wharf) by his military secretary and two aides-de-camp, whom he had taken over from his predecessor in office.) Amongst the crowd, the members of which jostled each other in the hall, in order to get as close as possible to his Excellency while he read his reply to the Address (which, by the way, contained an allusion to the battle of Toddlebeera, and caused West to smile, and Reckless to laugh, and a tear to rise in the eye of poor Daddleday, who was present), a passive spectator might have beheld in the countenances of many that which could not fail to disgust him. There were fifty or sixty per cent. of Daddledays in that crowd. Fawning, and hunger for "the slightest favour," gleamed in their eyes, and hung about their mouths. There is no place on the face of this globe where servility is so rank as in India, and especially in Calcutta. It is true that you now and then find independent men in the service; but they are very rare. The rule is, generally, to coincide, fall in with the views of the Governor-General, no matter how erroneous those views, resulting from inex-

perience, may be; and to avoid differing with the potentate for the time being. It is this which has led to so many disasters in India. And then, so vulgar is the ambition of those (not the personal staff) who are "about" the Governor-General, to be thought to influence him, that when wonder is expressed that such and such measures should have been adopted, those who have merely said, obsequiously, "Yes, my lord," to the Governor-General's suggestion, will take to themselves the credit of having *advised* such measures, and glory in the criticism or abuse which the local journals may direct against them personally! A curious instance of this occurred during the Affghan war. Several civilians, even after our disasters, boasted of having advised Lord Auckland to undertake it; and were not a little disgusted when Lord Broughton (then Sir John Hobhouse) stood up in his place in Parliament and laid sole claim to the authorship of the work!

* * * * *

The duties of an A.D.C. to the Governor-General of India are not very onerous in times of peace, divided as they are amongst four or five; and Reckless had abundance of time to devote to Mrs. North, who introduced him to the old Judge, who was very much obliged to him for his courtesy and attention to his wife during the voyage.

Sir Edward Ferret did not take much interest in the domestic matters of Government House, but left them entirely to his aides-de-camp; and so Reckless contrived to have old Mr. North and his wife at the large and small dinner-parties much oftener than they would have been, had not the lady and himself been fellow-passengers.

Busied as Sir Edward Ferret then was with the

cares of the empire, he did not notice the frequency of the presence of Mr. and Mrs. North—did not give it a single thought. He had, in fact, almost forgotten the flirtation on the voyage; and it was a matter of the utmost indifference to him who were invited. Not having his family about him, and not caring for the society which he was compelled to entertain, one portion of it bored him just as much as the other. But one morning Sir Edward, while in the act of deliberating how he should best deal with that turbulent and warlike race of people, who were just then threatening to invade the British territories, received a letter (or petition, rather), of which the following is a copy. (It came from a civilian, who held a high appointment in the Board of Revenue) :—

“YOUR EXCELLENCY,—During the past two months, I have had the honour of dining *once* at your Excellency’s table at Government House, while several other civilians of my own standing have been invited no less than *five* times; and in one case—that of Mr. North, of the Sudder Court—eleven times. I am aware that your Excellency has a right to make your own selection of the guests who are to be invited to your Excellency’s social board; but I trust your Excellency will see the justice of my complaint, when I point out to your Excellency that the omission of my name and that of my wife is calculated to prejudice me most seriously in the eyes of the members of my own service, as well as in the eyes of the native officials, who take a note of these things. It may be inferred that I have incurred your Excellency’s displeasure; and such, I trust, is not the case.

In the second place, it may be imagined that the slight which I, in common with almost every civilian, received at the hands of Lord Avalanche, was not unmerited; whilst I can conscientiously assure your Excellency that the only offence I ever offered to his lordship was bringing to his lordship's notice a Report that I drew up in the year 1832, on the revenues of the Dacca district, in order to show his lordship that certain views submitted by Mr. Lobin, of the Treasury, were incorrect in every particular.

"That the matter of which I complain is an oversight on the part of your Excellency's staff, I feel quite assured; and remain

"Your Excellency's most obedient and

"Most humble servant,

"JAMES LEADEN, B.C.S."

Sir Edward Ferret rang his handbell violently. A messenger—a native, who understood English—entered the room.

"Tell Mr. Cardin I wish to speak to him," said Sir Edward.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Sir Edward, when his private secretary made his appearance. "Why do you allow such trash as this to reach me?"

"What trash, sir?"

"This," said Sir Edward, handing him the letter.

"It was marked 'Private,' and sealed," said the private secretary, after looking at the letter and reading its contents.

"If Lord Avalanche received letters of this kind, I am not at all surprised at his violence. It has entirely

dispelled my ideas on a far more important subject. Answer it, however."

"What shall I say, sir?"

"Whatever you like; but let him be invited to dine. Give the poor dog a bone."

"But *I* cannot send him an invite, sir."

"No. Very true. Where is Captain Pelliar?" And the Governor-General rang the bell, which again brought in the messenger, who was commanded by his Excellency to tell Captain Pelliar to attend. Captain Pelliar (one of the aides-de-camp of the ex-Governor-General) entered.

"Look here, Captain Pelliar," said Sir Edward. "Here is a complaint made against your department. Pray let this gentleman's wants be attended to."

"He is a frightful bore, sir," said Captain Pelliar; "he is so full of finance. Lord Avalanche never could tolerate him more than once a month, at first; and had to give him up—strike his name out at last altogether. The Report that he alludes to, he presented to Lord Avalanche, handsomely bound, and my lord used to read some of it every night when he was restless and could not sleep; and my lord one evening told him so."

"But what about Mr. North? He complains of the number of times that Mr. North dines here."

"Mr. North is a very innocent old gentleman, sir, and was rather a favourite with Lord Avalanche. He draws his pay, says little about it, never speaks of his zeal, and recommends nothing. Lord Avalanche used to say that he was exactly what a Bengal civilian ought to be,—at a dinner table, especially."

"Well, he does not say much, certainly," said Sir Edward. "But, North? North? Why, that is the

name of the lady who was Reckless's friend! Ah! now I begin to understand. Where is Reckless? I wish to speak with him."

"I saw him talking with Major Plantagenet just now," said Captain Pelliard; "but I believe they have gone over to the stables."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE RING ON RECKLESS'S FINGER.

MAJOR PLANTAGENET and Reckless had *not* gone to the stables. They were in a jeweller's shop, that of Battye, Kittow, and Co. Reckless had lost the guard, or cover, of the ring which Leonora had given to him, and which he still wore "in memory of that dream," as he was now wont to think of it; and he wished for another cover to be made for it,—for something dictated to him, apart from the request of Colonel Ornsbie, that the stone should not be exposed.

"Can you take the ring off, Captain Reckless?" said Mr. Battye, the partner of the house, with whom Reckless spoke.

"No," said Reckless. "In the first place, it fits my finger so tightly; and in the second place, I am rather superstitious about removing it."

"It is a nice stone," said Mr. Battye.

"What is it?" said Reckless.

"An emerald; but strange to say, it has no *flaw* in it."

"It is not an emerald," said Reckless, observing that the stone was rapidly changing colour.

"I should like to have a bet on the subject, sir."

"What will you bet—fifty pounds?"

"Yes."

"Then hold my hand,* and keep your eye upon the stone for a few minutes."

Mr. Battye did so; and ere long the emerald became exactly like a piece of polished jet.

"I have lost my bet," said Mr. Battye, "inasmuch as this is not an emerald. It is a diamond."

"What! a black one?"

"Yes. But I suspect it is not always a black one."

"No. There you are right."

"You wouldn't part with it?"

"It depends ——"

"May I tempt you?"

"Oh, yes."

"Will you take 5000 rupees for this ring?"

"Certainly not."

"Will you take 10,000 rupees?"

"No."

"The third and the last time, 15,000 rupees?"

"No."

"Look here, Captain Reckless," said Mr. Battye; "I have two customers—natives. The one is the Rajah of Cardwan; the other, the Nawab of Furushabad. One or other of those might give a handsome sum for that stone, which up to this hour I, in common with all European jewellers in India, have regarded as a mere fable. Now, as a speculation on my part, I will make you one more offer; and before I do so, you will be so good as to recollect that money is now worth twelve per cent. Look here, Captain Reckless; in one word, I will give you £5000 for that stone—an income of £600 a year."

"Take it, my dear Reckless!" said Major Plantagenet. "Take it, and lend me some of the money."

"No; I wont part with it," said Reckless, "for that sum. To tell you the truth, I have been offered more."

"Well, name your price, sir," said Mr. Battye; "there is no harm in my hearing it. I gave seventy-five thousand rupees for a ruby just now, for the Rajah of Doorbaugah."

"Oh! I should ask more than that for this ring; but to tell you the real truth, Mr. Battye, I cannot part with it. Although I have the right to do what I please with it, I hardly think it is my property. So have the cover made for it."

"If it is not a rude question, may I ask if you have had it long?" said Mr. Battye.

"Eight or nine months," said Reckless.

"What! before you came to this country?"

"Yes."

"Bless me!" Looking out of the window, Mr. Battye observed—"How still everything has become! The crows even are silent; and see how the adjutants are settling themselves on the ground. We are going to have a storm."

"I knew that ten minutes ago," said Reckless. "The state of the atmosphere acts upon this stone, and it changes colour with every change of weather."

"I believe it to be *the* identical stone," said Mr. Battye; "but how the deuce it got to England is what puzzles *me*. I would advise you not to wear that ring, but deposit it in some safe place; or if you wear it, not to suffer it to be seen and talked of."

"That advice has been given to me already, and I have acted upon it," said Reckless; "but having lost

the cover, I have come to you to get another made. Have it made as plain as possible. When will it be ready?"

"The day after to-morrow you shall have it," said Mr. Battye.

Major Plantagenet and Reckless left the shop, and hurried to their apartments in Government House. They were scarcely under the roof of that stately pile, when, all of a sudden, a "north-wester," as these storms are called, came on. It was not of long duration; but while it lasted, the wind was very severe—so severe that the rain could scarcely fall to earth, carried along as it was, horizontally, in layers or sheets of water. The crows were blown or carried away by the storm to a considerable distance; and so would have been the adjutants, had they not, as they invariably do, anchored themselves by driving their long bills into the grass-plots, and lying at full length, head to the wind.

"What about that ring, Reckless?" said Major Plantagenet. "If it should be known that any one on the Governor-General's personal staff had a ring of that value, it would be said that it had been improperly come by; that it had been received as a bribe, or extorted from some native prince. It is a custom, when the Governor-General visits a native sovereign, to accept valuables of all kinds, and every member of the staff frequently receives a present in jewellery or shawls, or both; but the members of the staff, as well as the Governor-General, are expected to give them up to the State, and they *do* give them up. Lord Avalanche's private secretary was once presented by a native prince with jewels which realized at auction £4000 and upwards. They were given to him under

the impression that he would urge certain claims with my lord."

"My dear Plantagenet," said Reckless, "what I told Mr. Battye is the fact. This ring was given to me in England, and, what is more, by a girl—a beautiful girl—who had come from India. So she said."

"Who was she?"

"Ah! that is the question! Shall I tell you the whole story?"

"Do; I should like to hear it."

Here Reckless recounted all that the reader is in possession of—even unto the loss of the watch at the palace in Alexandria.

"It is about the oddest story I ever heard in my life," said Major Plantagenet; "and I am just as much bewildered as you say you are yourself. On such a statement of facts, it would be very difficult to come to *any* conclusion. But for this, you might conclude that; and but for that, you might conclude this. One thing, however, is very certain, that the nature of the girl's gifts to you negative the idea that she wished to make a dupe of you. Women who are not sincere never part with such valuables, unless it be in the hope of getting some great return in kind; and this cannot have been *her* motive, for you tell me that she knew you were a younger son, and had nothing but your pay and £200 a-year."

"Such is the case."

"Has her father—or her *soi-disant* father, Colonel Ornsbie—returned to India? I think you said he was to sail shortly after you."

"Yes; I saw his name in the list of passengers, but no Miss Ornsbie was amongst them!"

"Did you not see him on his arrival?"

"No; I avoided him. He was staying at Spence's. I was afraid to trust myself in his presence."

"Where is he now?"

"At one of the stations in the Upper Provinces. I forget the name; Mee—something or other."

"Meerut?"

"That is the name."

"Your regiment is stationed there."

"Is it? I did not know that."

"Yes; and if I were you, I would join the regiment. We should be very sorry to lose you from the staff; but my belief is, that every word that girl told you was the truth, and that you are bound in honour to see her in her own home; or, at all events, to present yourself to Colonel Gansbie, and say, 'Here I am, sir.' If he has deceived you, you ought to have satisfaction in some shape or other; if he has not, make your peace with his daughter."

"But, my dear Plantagenet, have I not the evidence of Binfield and Cheywyn? They are both gentlemen, and could have no object in giving false testimony, or inventing a tale to deceive me."

"True; I do not impugn the veracity of either of them. But I am convinced, Reckless, that there is, at the bottom of this affair, something that they are not aware of—something that neither you nor I can at present fathom. I repeat, that I believe every word that girl told you is the truth. As for this affair of yours in Calcutta, I should say that it had become rather a bore to you than otherwise. Is it not?"

Reckless blushed, and confessed that the Major was not far wrong in his surmise.

"My dear Reckless," continued the Major, who was very romantic-minded, though rather a "gay" man,

"this is an enterprise worthy of a Knight of the Olden Time. I would have given the half of my existence for such an adventure."

"But I am positive I have been fooled," said Reckless.

"What! with a ring for which you are offered £600 a-year? If you have been fooled, it has been by yourself, Reckless."

"I am sorry that I lost the watch, in which was her likeness," said Reckless, rather mournfully, for he now began to think that Major Plantagenet might be right in his conjecture as to Leonora's truth.

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entry of Captain Pelliar into Major Plantagenet's room.

"The G.-G. wants to talk to you, Reckless," said Captain Pelliar. "I told you it was wrong to put the Norths into the list so frequently; and now the matter has been brought to the notice of the G.-G., and by the very man whose name you struck out last week and the week before, in order to make room for your friends. I did my best to give a satisfactory explanation, but I suspect you are in for a mild lesson."

"Wants to see me?" said Reckless.

"Yes; and you had better go to him at once. He is alone in his private room."

Reckless left Major Plantagenet's apartments, and walked to the door of the Governor-General's private room. He knocked thrice with the knuckle of his forefinger. Sir Edward called out, "Come in!"

Reckless entered; and before the Governor-General had time to speak, said, "You wished to see me, sir?"

"Yes," said the Governor-General. "Sit down; I want to talk to you."

Reckless sat down opposite to his Excellency.

"Captain Reckless," Sir Edward began, "you made me a promise on the voyage, at Malta, which you kept to the letter, though not perhaps in the spirit. I do not intend to impute to you any dishonour in your proceeding—at least so far as I am concerned, or so far as yourself is concerned—for I was once as young and as lively as you are, and was for some time, in my youth, on the personal staff of a General officer. But it strikes me very forcibly it would be for your own good if you were to see something of life in cantonments, and of military duty. You have not yet joined a regiment, and I am not, perhaps, justified in keeping you here in Calcutta. The same remark applies to your friend, Edgar West, who has already signified to me his desire of making himself acquainted with the practical duties of his profession. I therefore intend, painful as it will be for me to part with you, to place you both at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief, who will, of course, issue the required General Order, which will be to the effect that you join your respective regiments. I will, however, take care that it shall not be supposed that you have in any way incurred my displeasure, for I will so word the 'Government Notification,' that both of you will be perfectly satisfied; and in the event of an army taking the field in December next, you may both of you rest assured that, if I be with that army, you will be on the strength of my staff, even if I should have to appoint you as extra aides-de-camp."

"I am very much obliged to you, Sir Edward," said Reckless; "and sorry as I shall be to leave you, I shall, nevertheless, be very glad to join my regiment—and even more glad to return to your personal staff,

should the contingency to which you have alluded really happen."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

COLONEL ORNSBIE IN INDIA.

It is a long distance to be carried on men's shoulders, nine hundred miles—the distance between Calcutta and Meerut; and both Reckless and West were heartily tired of the journey, which occupied them sixteen days and nights. The country, for the most part, is as monotonous as the ocean itself—a dead level, intersected by the Great Trunk Road, and on either side clumps of trees exactly resembling each other.

Six thousand troops were quartered in Meerut in those days, and it was no easy matter to find bungalows in any of the lines. West went to "chum" with two lieutenants in his regiment, who had a small bungalow between them; and Reckless accepted the offer of the Paymaster of his corps, who placed a couple of rooms at his disposal. Their first duty was to call upon the Major-General, Sir John Gay, who commanded the division, and this they did on the very day of their arrival. Sir John was a very old man—seventy-five, at least—but he was so made up as to look not more than forty. His wig fitted him to perfection; indeed, none but those who knew Sir John's age would have imagined that it was not his own hair. His eyebrows were trimmed and coloured with immense care. His white teeth were, of course, all false, as was the colouring of red and white upon his face. His chest was "false;" and he had padding on his hips, to give effect to his

slender and graceful figure. His clothes—his undress uniform, which he almost always wore—and his patent leather boots, fitted him (literally) like a glove. In a word, the General was the best-dressed man in India, and he was conscious of the fact. He was half blind, but too vain to wear glasses; and he was so deaf, that he never made an effort to hear what was said to him. The only person with whom he could really hold any converse was Major Sudor, his A.D.C., who had divined the great secret of making himself understood by the General, even without raising his voice. The General received Reckless and West—as he did every one else—with extreme courtesy and affability (he was a remarkably gentlemanlike old man in his manners), and affected to take a great interest in them. Major Sudor, previous to their being ushered in, had informed the General who they were, and to what regiments they belonged. Coming out of the General's house, Reckless in the verandah encountered Colonel Ornsbie, who was going in with a Report which he had been ordered to draw up. Reckless blushed—he alone knew why—and the Colonel seemed not a little confused. They shook hands, however; and on Reckless informing the Colonel of his intention of calling upon him, the Colonel replied, "Very well; I shall be glad to see you at any hour after three o'clock." Poor Reckless! he had not the courage to make any inquiries touching Leonora, for he was not yet satisfied by any means that he had not been deceived by the Colonel and the girl who called herself his daughter.

After making calls upon the colonels and the messes of the various regiments quartered in the station, the young officers went to their respective bungalows; and at a little after three o'clock Reckless requested the

loan of the Paymaster's buggy, in order that he might pay his visit to Colonel Ornsbie.

"He is a curious old fellow, that," said the Paymaster, while the horse was being harnessed for the buggy. "They say he has brought out from England a very beautiful young wife, but that he shuts her up in that big house of his, and never allows her to be seen by any one."

"Indeed!" said Reckless.

"Yes," said the Paymaster. "The only time she moves out, they say, is at night, when she wanders all alone in that magnificent garden, or rides round the grounds on a white Arab. One of our youngsters the other night went down and got upon the wall of the garden, and saw her—or, at all events, saw a female figure dressed in white, and heard her talking to herself. We have all called there, but have never seen any one but the Colonel himself, who very rarely is away from home."

"Married, eh?" said Reckless.

"So they say," replied the Paymaster; "but she may *not* be his wife, you know."

"Perhaps his daughter," suggested Reckless.

"Oh, no; she is not his daughter. He has never had any family," returned the Paymaster.

By this time the buggy was ready, and at the door. Reckless got into the vehicle, and drove down to the Colonel's house, the syce (native groom) running on ahead to show the way.

The Colonel's house was situated in the centre of about three hundred acres of land, enclosed by a tall cactus hedge, which was then in full bloom. The grounds about the house formed a park of mango, seesu, and other Oriental trees of luxuriant foliage. The

gardens, which were at some distance from the dwelling, and near the chief entrance, were surrounded by a hedge of mindhee (a species of myrtle), covered with white clustering roses. The road leading to the house was made of what the natives call "soorkie" (pounded bricks), and was of a scarlet colour. On either side of the road, and all over the estate, grew grass (about fifteen inches high), the seed of which had been brought from the Cape of Good Hope. There had been a refreshing shower of rain in the morning, and the air (in the language of Bulwer) was "musical with birds." Reckless thought it the most beautiful place he had ever seen in his life—certainly the most beautiful place he had seen in the East.

An orderly, dressed in jack-boots, white leather breeches, and a blue jacket, was standing in the verandah of the Colonel's house when Reckless drove under the portico opposite to the door.

"Is Colonel Ornsbic within?" Reckless inquired.

"Yes, sir," said the orderly.

"I wish you would send in this card to him," said Reckless, descending from the buggy.

A native servant came out, and placing his hands together, after the fashion of servants in the East, pronounced two words in Hindoostance, which had become so very familiar to Reckless's ears, that he knew their signification—

"Ap-ayieé!" (Sir, be pleased to come.)

Reckless followed the native servant to a room at the end of the building, in which he found the Colonel seated at a table covered with papers and books. The meanness of the furniture in the apartment struck Reckless almost as forcibly as the semi-coldness and confusion of the Colonel's manner. The table had been

made out of old beer chests; the chairs (there were only three in the room) were of the very commonest description, and of native manufacture. There was not even a mat upon the floor, and the walls had not been whitewashed, evidently, for the past three or four years. There was a native bedstead in the room—a beadstead which might have been bought, when new, for one rupee eight annas (three shillings of English money). On this bedstead was spread a coverlet, commonly called in India a *resaise*; and laid out upon it was the uniform which the Colonel had just worn, when he paid his visit to the General. When Reckless saw him in this apartment, the Colonel's apparel was rather scanty; it consisted only of a flannel shirt and pyjamahs, a skull-cap, and a pair of sheep-skin slippers (no socks); and all of these articles had been in use, from the look of them, for several, if not very many, years. He looked far more a portrait of Daniel Dancer, the celebrated miser, than a very plucky Colonel in the Bengal Horse Artillery.

Cracking his knuckles (it was a habit with him in India, whilst he was speaking), the Colonel said:—

“I dare say, Mr. Reckless, you will be glad to see Leonora?”

Reckless was half-ashamed. His conscience smote him; but he contrived to reply—

“Indeed I shall, Colonel.”

“I have told her of your arrival in the station, and she is prepared for your visit. If you will follow me, I will conduct you to the door of her apartments. They are at the other end of the house.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Reckless, following the Colonel, who had now risen from his chair, and was moving into a small court-yard, which he crossed, and then opened a door at the end of a passage which led

to a library well stocked with books, and decorated with some choice oil-paintings and engravings. After passing through the library, they entered a large room which was furnished with tables, chairs, and couches of solid white marble, and carpeted with crimson silk. The light came from the roof, and the effect was lovely. The next room they entered was a drawing-room, well filled with furniture of European manufacture, and tastefully arranged. The curtains were of green damask, and the ornaments (chiefly Oriental) were of the most costly description—bulls, camels, elephants, leopards, tigers, &c.—some of them in black marble, some in pure silver, others in gold. On the walls of this apartment were some very rare engravings of the last century.

“She is not here,” said the Colonel. “Wait, and I will send her to you.” And retiring, he left Reckless alone in the drawing-room, which was as still as the Chamber of Death. The punkah was moving, and cooling the apartment, but its movement was noiseless; it was pulled from the outside, and the rope was of velvet, carried through a hole in the wall. Suspended from the ceiling were several bird-cages, covered over so as to exclude the light from their inmates, and presently these birds began to sing. They were shamas; and their note equalled—aye, surpassed—that of the English nightingale. This room was also carpeted with rich crimson silk, and had its subdued light from the roof. At one end was a white marble fountain, in which numbers of gold-fish noiselessly sported. At the other end was a large cage containing two birds, a minah and a parrot, but they were, or appeared to be, sleeping. But when Reckless approached them they opened their eyes, shook their feathers, flapped their

wings, and began to talk to each other in Hindoostanee—speaking quite as plainly as human beings. Presently the minah addressed Reckless in English, and in a voice so like that of Leonora, he was startled.

“What is the hour? Has the sun set?” inquired the bird.

“No,” said Reckless; “it is only half-past three o’clock.”

“Oh, indeed,” said the parrot. “Hear that, minah.”

“Don’t chatter, parrot,” said the minah; “you make my head ache. Take a bath, and be quiet.”

Reckless, full of thought as he was, could not refrain from laughing; and while he was doing so, the door of the room opened, and there entered a girl of about fourteen years of age. She was very black, but her features were regular and handsome, and the expression of her face extremely pleasing. She wore a dress of white muslin, such as native girls of rank usually wear, and her wrists and ankles were encircled respectively by heavy bracelets and bangles of pure gold. Advancing towards Reckless, she said, in a very sweet voice, and in very plain English—

“She will be here presently. Pray, sit down, sir. Shall I order some refreshment for you?”

“None, I thank you,” said Reckless, contemplating the girl with great curiosity and some surprise; for he had never seen any native like her in manners or in personal appearance.

“I hope the birds have not been rude to you, sir,” said the girl. “They are both very pert and insolent at times.”

“Not at all. They have amused me very much,” replied Reckless.

"Not at all—amused me very much," said the minah, mocking Reckless.

"Not at all—amused me very much," said the parrot, mocking the minah.

"Hold your tongue, you miserable handful of feathers," said the minah.

"For shame, minah!" exclaimed the parrot.

"Dear Shereenee!" said the minah.

"What do you want?" said the girl, to whom the bird spoke.

"Let me out, Shereenee," said the bird.

"I can't—I have not the key of the cage," said the girl.

"Then I shall die in a fit," said the minah; and he fell from his perch on his back, quivered, acted the agonies of death, and then remained still, his right leg stretched out at full length by his side, and the left leg raised in the air.

"He is dead!" said Reckless.

"No; he is only playing," said the girl. "But I must leave you, sir. She will be here presently;" and with these words the girl withdrew, leaving Reckless in a state of mind approaching bewilderment, but watching the wonderful bird who was lying as still as a stone. Again the door was opened. Reckless looked round impatiently, expecting to see Leonora; but he was disappointed. In her stead appeared a boy about twelve years old. He was as black as ebony, short for his age, but stout, and frightfully pitted by the small-pox. He was, perhaps, the ugliest boy that Reckless had ever seen; his nose was flat, his lips thick, his eyes small and rather bleary, his forehead low and broad, and in the expression of his eye there was something of atrocious cruelty. He wore a turban, in which

was a bunch of feathers fastened by an agate brooch ; a Cashmere shawl, tight-fitting trousers of white calico, and shoes embroidered all over with gold. In his cumerbund—the white cloth which was twisted round his waist—was a dagger, and in his right hand he carried a bouquet of roses, which he presented to Reckless, who thanked him for the gift, and then spoke to him in English—a language which the boy signified by gestures that he did not understand. There was an arrogance about the bearing of this boy which Reckless disliked extremely ; and he wore an air of condescension when he presented the flowers which was fearfully repugnant to an English gentleman.

As soon as the minah heard the voice of the boy, he ceased to feign death, sprang up upon his perch, and said—

“Sahib-i alam ! Bundagee ! Apka ka tuckt quaim rahen !”—which signifies, “Lord of the world ! I am your slave ! May your throne be perpetual !”

“Choop raho !” (be silent) said the parrot, speaking Hindoostanee to the minah. “Huzoor ka somne kon awaz dega ?” (“In the presence of his Highness, who may lift up his voice ?”)

“Râst ust !” responded the minah, in the Persian language. “Dur een cheh shuk ?” (“That is true. What doubt of it ?”)

The punkah which was cooling the room, stayed in its motion ; the native servant who was pulling it had fallen asleep. The eyes of the boy, who was in the room with Reckless, were lighted up with a fiendish joy, and he hastened into the verandah at the back part of the dwelling. In another moment, Reckless heard a shriek ; and then the punkah began to wave strongly, but, as before, noiselessly. The boy did not return to

Reckless, who was still alone, contemplating all that he saw in the room, and impatiently awaiting the coming of Leonora. Reckless did not in his heart reproach her for the delay; but his heart told him that in reality he had lost all right or claim to Leonora's love or consideration; but he thought it a breach of politeness on her part to keep him so long in that apartment before she made her appearance, especially as the Colonel had prepared her for his visit.

At length she came, looking as beautiful as ever, but careworn and wretched. She extended both her hands as she advanced to Reckless, and looked kindly into his eyes; but there was nothing of enthusiasm in the reception that she gave him.

They were alone; and for a brief while,—until they have got over sundry little speeches which are only of interest to lovers themselves,—we will leave them, and detail the particulars of the interview in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

RECKLESS'S PATIENCE IS TAXED.

"AUGUSTUS," said Leonora, "you have done my father a very great wrong."

"How?"

"You have talked of him, and of me, on the passage to India?"

"Did I?"

"Surely you must remember. One of the gentlemen to whom you talked of us, is at present com-

manding a troop in Meerut—a troop in my father's brigade."

"What! Major Cheywyn?"

"You convict yourself, Augustus. Did you not promise me that you would *not* talk of me until after we met in my home?"

"Yes, dear Leonora; but when a man is insane with love——"

"He should not compromise the object of his affection. I do not wish to reproach you, because the storm has now blown over. My father has forgiven you on my entreaty; and I also have forgiven you—forgiven you that offence, as well as another offence which you have committed since our parting in England; because I know that you love me, Augustus, now that you see me again, just as ardently as ever, and just as ardently as I still love you."

"To what offence do you allude, Leonora?"

"To this!" she replied, taking from her girdle the watch which Reckless lost in Alexandria, and in the case of which was her portrait. "You know, of course, under what circumstances it was lost; but not under what circumstances it was found. We had better not discourse further on this subject. I have forgiven you all; because I know I ought to make many allowances for that state of mind which the very circumstance of your coming to India induced. There! take your watch."

"Dear, generous Leonora!" said Reckless.

"Dear, untrusting Augustus!" replied the girl, looking with extreme tenderness into his manly and handsome face.

"I have now seen thee in thy home, dearest."

"Not yet."

"Is not this your home?"

"Yes; but you have only seen a part of it. The remainder you shall see after dark, if you are disposed to remain till that hour. ~~You~~ will dine with me? We shall be alone. To-night my father dines at the mess. He is obliged to do so. Some young officers have joined the brigade, and he conceives that it is his duty to be present at the mess-dinner. May I send away your buggy? Or, will you return at half-past seven?"

"May I remain with you?"

"Yes."

"Then I will send the buggy away."

There are no bells to ring in India;—the voice is employed. Leonora called aloud, "Koi hai?" ("Is any one there?") An ayah, an old woman, rather gorgeously dressed, entered the room; and in the Hindoostanee language Leonora gave her several orders.

Presently, the boy to whom the reader has been already introduced re-entered the room, and held some conversation with Leonora in a language of which Reckless did not understand a single word, for it was not in Hindoostanee or in Persian that the boy spoke. Of both these languages Reckless had acquired some little knowledge, short as his stay had been in India; and although he could not converse, nor understand all that was said, in either of them, yet he knew sufficient to enable him to guess or conclude upon what subject people were discoursing.

The boy, albeit he did not speak loudly, seemed angry and discontented; and on being answered by Leonora rather abruptly, he walked out of the room with a surly air, and the expression of a demon stamped upon his features, over which played a scornful smile.

"Who is that?" said Reckless, when the boy left them.

"He is a young Mahratta chief," was the reply. "His family are relations of Scindia."

"He is not particularly handsome."

"No;—forbidding in appearance."

"Nor are his manners very gentle."

"He is of a savage disposition."

"And treacherous, I should say."

"I should be sorry to trust him."

"And who was the young person—a girl—who came to me with a message from you? She was not a servant?"

"Oh, no! She is the sister of that boy."

"Indeed? She is very unlike him."

"Yes; in every respect. She is kind, gentle, affectionate, intelligent, and trustworthy."

"And if she were not so black, she would be very handsome—her features are so exquisitely formed. What is her name?"

"'Shereenee'—a Persian word, signifying 'sweetness.'"

"Persian word!" said the minah.

"Fying sweetness!" said the parrot.

"I really forgot the presence of those birds," said Leonora. "It is not safe to talk before them."

And as though they wished to confirm the truth of her statement, the minah said to the parrot, "My own!" and the parrot responded, "Dearest Augustus." They had "picked up" these expressions between them, and now began to practise them.

"What strange birds!" said Reckless. "They are very clever."

"And very old," said Leonora. "The minah—the bird with the black plumage and yellow feet and beak—is more than forty years of age; and the parrot is older still. You shall hear some of their performances by-and-bye—the minah's imitations of every bird that sings in India, and the parrot's 'reflections,' or 'criticisms,' as we call them. The natives say and believe that the souls of human beings who committed suicide are imprisoned in the bodies of those birds."

"But you do not believe that?"

"No; but sometimes they make me very unhappy. They say such very odd things in the Mahratta, Persian, and Hindoostanee languages,—quotations from poets, which they have been taught to repeat years and years ago, and which they seem suddenly to remember, and rehearse with extraordinary accuracy and appropriateness."

"You are sure that you have forgiven me, my own dear Leonora, for all the offences of which I have been guilty?"

"All, dearest Augustus. All is forgiven up to this hour."

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"The sun went down at six o'clock; and at half-past (there is no twilight in the East) the moon, which was nearly at her full, rose, and lighted up the grounds which encircled Colonel Ornsbie's abode. By moonlight the place seemed even more beautiful to the eyes of Reckless than by daylight. Leonora led him into the garden, the broad walks of which were watered every afternoon to lay the dust. The perfume from the orange and citron blossoms was rather overpowering at first, but a gentle breeze sprung up and diminished its effect upon the senses."

"What are these?" asked Reckless, pointing to some round-topped trees about five feet high.

"Peach-trees," said Leonora. "In this garden, upon which a native of India expended a very large sum of money, the fruits of every clime come forth in perfection. Within a few yards of this peach-orchard, the plantain bears its fruit. The branches of the guava-tree touch the branches of the orange-tree. The strawberry blossoms and bears fruit beneath the shade of the pomegranate, the pine-apple flowers close to the fig-tree, and the mango and the plum fall within a few yards of each other."

"Do you ever wander here alone, at night-time?"

"Yes."

"Are you not afraid?"

"No."

"But you have been overheard talking to yourself. Suppose you were assailed?"

"I have always the means of protection at my command."

"How?"

"Shall I really show you?"

"Yes."

Leonora took from her girdle a diminutive whistle, which she blew shrilly. In less time than it takes to write this sentence, she was surrounded by at least eleven men, with drawn swords—and fine-looking, soldierlike men they were, but excited, and seemingly anxious to know the object of her summons.

Addressing them in the Mahratta language, Leonora said—"Look at this Sahib! Observe well his features! Whatever commands he may at any time give to all of you, or any of you, those commands you will obey.

"Dearest Leonora," said Reckless, when each of the

armed men whom she had summoned had looked into his face, and pressed his ankles with their hands in token of their submission, and retired—"I thought that when I had seen you in your home in the East, that all those mysteries which so perplexed me in Europe would be solved. But, alas! instead thereof, they accumulate."

"Dearest Augustus, this night will solve them all. Be patient."

"Who were those men who ran to your assistance?"

"Retainers."

"Servants?"

"No; dependents."

"Of whom?—the Colonel?"

"No."

"Of yourself?"

"No."

"Of that black boy?"

"No. Dear Augustus, be patient for only a few hours longer."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE MYSTERY IS SOLVED.

RECKLESS and Leonora had dined. They had been waited upon during the meal by female slaves, who resembled African women rather than natives of Hindoostan. But they were not Africans. They were Hindoos—Mahrattas, of high "caste," but of mean origin, so far as worldly position was concerned. (Such is the contradiction involved in Asiatic nobility!)

At about nine o'clock, and after they had discussed a variety of topics relating chiefly to Europe, Leonora arose, and said to Reckless, "Will you follow me?"

"Yes," he replied.

She lingered near the door, looked very earnestly at him, sighed several times, and then, as though reluctantly, she led the way through a suite of rooms, and several passages and verandahs, until at last they stood at a door not more than four feet high by three feet broad. At this door Leonora knocked. A female voice from within asked—

"Kôn?" ("Who?")

Leonora answered—

"Hum!" ("It is I.")

The door was immediately opened; and Leonora, followed by Reckless, entered an apartment which was something like an English kitchen. The smell of garlic, by the way, was rather strong; for cooking was going on, and in India they use plentifully that offensive vegetable. After leaving this apartment, they entered a room, the floor of which was covered with a Turkey carpet, and on which sat several—say six or seven—native women; but their faces were covered for the most part, and Reckless could only see their eyes. They did not get up, or pay any sort of court to Leonora and her companion; but began (for Leonora stayed in this room for several minutes) to talk with each other, and occasionally to laugh. They were very elegantly dressed, and each had a small hookah by her side. One of them spoke to Reckless in Hindoostanee; but as he could not understand what she said, nor make himself understood, Leonora acted as interpreter, having previously explained to him that the questions she put to him were not considered a rudeness in the East; but,

on the contrary, that they were, under the circumstances, a great politeness. He was asked how old he was—how many brothers and sisters he had—if he were rich—if he loved Leonora very much—and if he thought her beautiful. To all these questions, Reckless gave very truthful replies. The next apartment which they entered was a small one, and here they found Shereenee seated on a carpet, with an old woman near to her. Shereenee arose, and asked Reckless, in English, to “take a chair, and sit down;” an invitation which he accepted, for Leonora had seated herself on the carpet, close to the old woman, and had begun to talk to her. The old woman, however, did not seem to listen, her eyes were fixed so steadily on the face of Reckless, whose active brain instantly began to conjecture all sorts of things.

Leonora then led him into another apartment, brilliantly lighted up, and the floor of which was covered with a rich Turkey carpet; but the room contained no furniture, except two arm-chairs of European manufacture. At one end of the room was a large cushion, such as wealthy natives usually recline against. The walls were covered with mirrors, and the pictures of native heroes and heroines; and near the cushion was a hookah of great beauty. The bottom part was of silver, inlaid with rubies, emeralds, carbuncles, turquoises, and other precious stones. The stem was of gold, and the bowl which held the tobacco and the cover for it of the same metal. The snake was covered with blue silk, and the mouthpiece was formed of a piece of agate. Perfumes of every kind had recently been sprinkled on the carpet.

“The Ranee will be here presently,” said Leonora.

“Who is the Ranee?” inquired Reckless.

"She is the mother of the boy whom you have seen, and of Shereenee."

"Does she speak English?"

"Yes; but not fluently or grammatically. You must not talk to her too rapidly. Observe her well; for I want you to tell me by-and-bye what you think of her, and whether you like her or not."

"But what is she doing here?"

"That you shall learn afterwards."

"Is she a woman of rank?"

"Of course. She is descended from a long line of kings and warriors. Her ancestors were amongst the foremost to overthrow the Mahommedan dynasty. It was her great-great-grandfather who carried off the silver gates of the Taj Mahal at Agra, and had them melted and made into rupees to pay his victorious hordes of troops. It was he, they say, who caused to be carried away the gate of the Tomb in the Taj, and buried it somewhere in Bhurtpore—a gate formed of a single piece of agate four feet high, and almost as broad."

At this moment the Ranee entered the room, and advancing to Reckless, she made a salaam, and requested him to take one of the chairs; the other Leonora took possession of. The Ranee then seated herself on the carpet, and entered into conversation with her visitor.

Let us describe the Ranee. She was about forty years of age; black—almost as black as the boy who has been described, and who was her son. She, too, was pock-pitted, but the disease had not robbed her of an intellectual and pleasing expression of countenance. Her manners were courteous, but rather abrupt; and her voice was not so musical as the voices

of most women in India. Her attire was very simple—white muslin, like that of her daughter, Shereenee; but her jewels were such as could not fail to attract attention. Diamonds, and pearls, and rubies sparkled on her black arms, and neck, and ankles, and from her ears, and on her fingers. She was not “got up” for the occasion. The dress and ornaments that she wore were such as she usually wore.

“Do you smoke the hookah?” the Ranee inquired of Reckless.

“Sometimes,” said he.

“Will you smoke now?”

Reckless thanked her; whereupon she called aloud, and was speedily surrounded by slave girls (some of them rather pretty), to whom she gave directions. The hookah was brought, and Reckless began to smoke it. Ere long, Shereenee entered and seated herself on the carpet, by the side of her mother. For this young girl Reckless had conceived a very great liking. There was something so winning in her brilliant eyes—something so sweet in her voice, and so gentle in her manner. And in her ringing but subdued laugh there was a heartiness which was extremely pleasing to the ear; while the eye had an opportunity of seeing a set of teeth as white as snow, and all seemingly of the same size, so very regular were they. The Ranee was evidently very fond of this child—she exhibited her affection in her looks—and Shereenee was evidently very fond of her mother. The boy also came into the room, but he would not sit down; he was angry, spoke loudly in the Mahratta language; and when spoken to, answered only in monosyllables, and gruffly. It was very plain that the cause of his anger was the presence of Reckless in the apartments of his mother and

sister. He did not stay very long, however, and left the room uttering sentences which sounded very like curses. For more than two hours Reckless remained in the apartments of the Ranee, and talked to her on very many subjects. Leonora herself was not very talkative on this occasion; she sat watching intently and anxiously the expression of her lover's face.

"I hope we shall meet again, Sahib," said the Ranee, when Reckless, having noticed the signal from Leonora, rose to take his departure.

Reckless made a polite and appropriate reply, accepted the hand which the Ranee offered him, and bade her a "good-night." He also shook hands with Shereenee, for whom his liking had now grown into something like an affection.

"This way," said Leonora; and she led him through a narrow passage, at the end of which was a door. She opened it, and they were in the grounds—in the broad moonlight and the cool air.

"Augustus, you have now seen all that I wished to show you," said Leonora. "Can you now divine the motives which induced me to impose that condition?"

"Yes, dearest; but what is it *to us*?"

"Tell me what you conjecture."

"I conjecture that that old lady was the widow of some rich native chief, and that your father, after becoming a widower, married her for her money; that she has been very kind to you; and that you made her a promise that you would never marry without presenting to her the man of your choice, and asking her consent?"

"It is true that I did make her such a promise; but you have not divined the whole truth. Listen to

me, Augustus! *You have seen, in the Ranee, my father's only wife—my own mother!*”

Augustus started, then stood still, in the centre walk of the garden, where they were now conversing. “Impossible!” he cried.

“Nothing is impossible with God,” said Leonora. “Yes; she is my own mother! and that girl is my own sister! and that boy my own brother!”

Reckless listened, but he did not speak; he could not, in short—so much was he astounded.

Leonora continued:—

“Do not decide hastily, Augustus; nor let your love for me hurry you to a judgment which in after-days you may repent of. Ponder well. Ask yourself whether, after what you have seen, and heard from my lips, you can willingly wed me? Put it to yourself as broadly as you please. Say, if you will,—‘A black woman for my mother-in-law, a black sister, and a black brother!—and such a brother! Can I conscientiously take her for a wife, with all these ties of blood and relationship?’”

Reckless was so astonished at this revelation, that he was unable for a while to reply.

“I am glad that you hesitate,” said Leonora. “By doing so, you convince me that the resolution which no entreaty could shake in Europe, was a wise resolution on my part. You have been but a few months in India, but long enough, more than long enough, to know the stigma that is conveyed in the term ‘Half-Caste,’ the offspring of the white man and the black woman. It is not, Augustus, that I am so fair that no one would dream the truth—no one believe that such is my parentage. It is the fact that you, and you alone, have to deal with.”

Reckless looked into her beautiful face, and clasped her to his heart. "Dear Leonora!" he exclaimed.

"There is another matter, Augustus," she said, in a mournful voice, "which, painful as it may be, I must touch upon and bring to your knowledge. The freaks of nature are often wonderful. I am fair—as fair as yourself; but our offspring probably would be so dark that there could be no doubt in the mind of any beholder that they were of mixed origin—Asiatic and European; and this might be carried through several generations. It often happens, I have been told, and that it will happen in all such cases."

"Dear Leonora!" again Reckless exclaimed, passionately; but these were the only words that he could utter. His love for her was, of course, unabated; but so great was his horror—so strong the prejudice he had imbibed for what is called "black blood"—so intense his antipathy to the mixed race with whom he had come into contact since his arrival in India—that he could not hastily reconcile himself to a renewal of his offer, and reserved his decision for some future time.

"The story of my life," said Leonora, resting her head upon his shoulder, "is, indeed, a strange one. No recluse in a convent has been more secluded from the outer world than I have been. Until I was ten years old, the only European face I ever beheld was that of my father. After I had attained that age, I saw white men—officers of the regiment of Artillery and other regiments; but only through a screen or a purdah, which concealed me from their eyes. I am unknown in India. I question whether my face has ever been seen by European eyes in this country, save by those of my father and yourself; for whenever I have moved out, either on the plains of India or in the hills, I have been

veiled and disguised, even as I was on the voyage to and from England. The little education I have has been the result of my father's patience and my own exertions. Books of every kind, and pictures illustrative of European life and society, have always been at my disposal, and it was from these that I gleaned all that I knew of either, until I found myself at the Downs. But we Asiatics are a quick and an imitative race, and ere long I did not feel at all embarrassed in the company of those who called upon me. Amongst the first were the members of your own family. And think well of *this*, Augustus. Think whether your mother and your sisters—had they seen and heard this night what *you* have seen and heard—would approve or condemn you for uniting yourself to me in wedlock?"

"What need of their knowing it, dear Leonora?" said Reckless.

"But they must know all, if ever we are united. Think you that I would become a member of your family on false pretences, or surreptitiously?"

"But, dearest, I have decided. You will be mine? You will marry me?"

"Not in the East, Augustus. If we wed, it must be in England. You have talked of me and of my father during your voyage to India, and you have, in consequence, destroyed all the plans which I had formed in my own mind—supposing that you renewed your offer after you had seen me in my own home. I do not reproach you now for what has passed—for bygone imprudence; but I entreat you that in the future you will be less unbelieving—less untrusting. Had I not loved as fervently as I do, I would have agreed with my father that the hour was not an auspicious one when our eyes first met—Hark! that is my father's voice.

He has returned from the mess, and is ordering the watchmen to see that the gates are closed for the night. But if you be not weary, dear Augustus, you need not take your departure. You shall be conveyed safely to your bungalow in an hour hence, and in my palanquin."

"Dearest Leonora!" said Reckless, "why should you suppose that I am weary of your society? Was there ever seen so beautiful and bright a moon shining in a cloudless sky on so beautiful a maiden?"

"Come! let us walk through the orange-grove," said Leonora. "You have a romantic spirit, but it has taken root in an European—an uncongenial soil. You must talk to my mother, the Ranee—she likes you. I saw it in her eyes, and my heart throbbed with delight. You must see her again—some day at noon—and hear the story of her love. It is as romantic a tale as the ear of man ever listened to."

"I shall only be too glad to see her again. I have a great regard for her, apart from the circumstance that she gave birth to you. And, do you know, Leonora, I think I could have loved that sister of yours—albeit she is not fair, but black? There is a sweetness in the expression of her face, a charm in her voice, which haunts me. When may I come?"

"Not to-morrow, but the day after. The boy, my brother, leaves Meerut the day after to-morrow, on a visit to the Rajah of Jhansee, whose ancestors were formerly retainers of the Peishwa—low people, though Brahmins, who were ennobled by Lord William Bentinck, I believe. The Jhansee Rajah is what the natives call "a Company's Rajah"—a merchant-lord. In his dominions there is great sporting, of which my brother is passionately fond, and he is as cruel as the

wild beasts against whom he makes war. There is to be a great gathering in Jhansee. Hindoo Rao is to be there."

"Who is Hindoo Rao?"

Leonora laughed, and replied—"Dear Augustus, you remind me of a scene in the drawing-room at Rockless Castle. I one day innocently asked Lady Mary, 'Who is the Duchess of Sutherland, whose name I see so often in the newspapers?' She looked at me with as much surprise—and so did your sisters—as though I had openly avowed a disbelief in the Christian religion. Hindoo Rao is a relation of the reigning family at Gwalior, and a relation of my mother. He is perhaps the greatest sportsman in the whole world. He is now a pensioner of the Gwalior State. They give him a lac and twenty thousand rupees (£12,000) a-year, which is guaranteed to him by the British Government on condition that he will not again attempt to possess himself of the Gwalior throne. If ever you see the Maharajah, you will be struck with the extraordinary likeness that he bears to that—I must use the word—to that brother of mine, who abhors the Christian race, including even his own father!"

"Is not the Ranee a Christian?"

"Yes; but the boy is a Hindoo. It was a knotty question, and the Brahmins have decided it in his favour; and say, further, that he is eligible for adoption by any Hindoo Rajah."

"How? Explain, dearest."

"If a Hindoo Rajah, who has no children of his own, adopts that boy as his son, and gives notice to the Government, the boy becomes the Rajah's heir, and has a claim to the title and dominions. But

Heaven forbid that that boy should ever become an independent Prince, he is so malicious and so cruel. The Mahrattas—the men—are all cruel people. Even Hindoo Rao will say sometimes to my mother, ‘*I love the Christian, because I hate him so much; and because he ensures to me my pension!*’ And Hindoo Rao is considered one of the greatest friends and firmest supporters of the British Government! We must part for the night—it is past one o’clock. Be silent, be prudent, dear Augustus. Come! I will send you to your home. The day after to-morrow, at twelve, we will meet again.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE STORY OF THE RANEE’S LOVE.

WHEN Colonel Ornsbie was a young man—that is to say, twenty-three—and just before he came into possession of the fortune willed to him by his aunt, he was appointed assistant to the Governor-General’s agent at one of the native courts in Central India. Here he was seen at the palace by a young girl, who became enamoured of him; and whenever he passed that portion of the building which she occupied, she would put her hand through the marble screen which concealed her from the view of those outside, and drop a flower. The young Lieutenant—such was then the Colonel’s rank in the army—began to notice this, and to look regularly for the black hand dropping the flower, which he would pick up and carry away with him to his bungalow. At first he was puzzled to know

the motive of this attention. The natives are strange people, and often discourse symbolically, and a favourite means of conveying bribes is in fruit and in flowers. It was in an orange that Mrs. Clowman—"unbeknown" to her husband, of course, he being the Resident at Kubsoo at the time—received her jewels from the Prime Minister of that corrupt native state, which, in consequence of its corruption, her husband wished to see "annexed." It was in a bunch of flowers that the string of pearls came to the hands of the wife of the Governor-General's agent at Fiddnepore—"unbeknown," of course, to her husband, who was "ready" (he said) to destroy himself when the facts became known.

For upwards of five weeks this dropping of flowers continued; and one day, when passing the screen, a piece of bamboo fell with the flower (a rose-bud) at the young lieutenant's feet. That pretty little episode in Boccaccio's story of Sigismonda and Guiscardo instantly occurred to Lieutenant Ornsbie's mind; and taking up the piece of stick and the flower, he went straight to his abode. The rose-bud he placed in a drawer with the other flowers—for he had preserved them all since the knowledge came to him that the dropping of them meant something; and being a cautious youth, and fully impressed with the necessity of taking notes while employed in diplomatic service, he had kept a diary of the whole proceeding. This done, he proceeded to examine the piece of bamboo, and in it he found a ring, and a piece of paper, upon which was written, with gilt ink, and in Persian characters, one word—"MASHOOK," which signifies "my love."

There was a dash of romance in the character of young Ornsbie, and he was always a very adventurous person. Nothing could be seen through that piece of

marble network which formed the screen, and therefore it was in vain that he looked up at it when he passed. The danger of carrying on a correspondence, even by signs and signals—no matter how innocently—with a woman, girl, or any one else shut up in those apartments, was fully apparent to the young officer; but he could not resist the temptation that had been thrown in his way; and on the following afternoon, when he went to pay his visit at the palace, and passed the marble screen, he missed the flower, and none was thrown to him; but he observed a piece of red thread hanging down, and reaching within a few feet of the ground. There was no one near. The retainers of the Maharajah, at whose court the lieutenant was serving in a political capacity, were enjoying their after-dinner sleep. Taking from his pocket a letter, from which he detached a piece of paper not larger than a shilling, he wrote upon it, in pencil, one word in Hindoostanee, composed of three letters—“*Kon ?*” (“Who?”)—and attached it to the end of the thread, which was instantly drawn up. The young lieutenant then proceeded to the apartments of the Vizier, had an audience, transacted business, and was returning. Again, when passing the screen, he saw the red thread, and attached to the end of it a little piece of paper, on which was written these words in Hindoostanee—“*Chota Chyryea—pinjra me.*” (“A little bird in a cage.”)

The lieutenant's soul was now on fire. He had heard that there was a girl—a relation of the Maharajah's—shut up in the palace, and detained there against her will; but up to this moment he had not taken any serious heed of the story, and possibly he would not now have taken any notice of it, had it not been that he had received a declaration of love and a token

thereof. On the spot he determined, at all hazards, to free the little bird from her cage; and tearing off another little piece of paper from the margin of the letter he had previously torn, he wrote upon it, in Hindoostanee, two words—"Araahee dengey," ("I will give you your liberty.") This exploit instantly became with the young lieutenant a fixed idea; and with that love for the mysterious which so often swells the breast of a youth of Ornsbie's temperament, a love for the object of his solicitude became intimately associated, albeit he had never seen more than the hand from which she had been wont to drop the flowers.

A more elaborate correspondence now ensued between the lieutenant and the prisoner, who truthfully represented whom she was, and the reason of her incarceration in that palace, instead of being permitted to dwell with her relations in Gwalior.

His plans laid, the young lieutenant applied for leave to the Hills, north of Dehra (Mussoorie). The leave was granted; and on a stormy night at the end of September, amidst thunder, lightning, wind, and rain, and when all the inhabitants of the palace were occupied with their own affairs or their fears, the marble screen—the door of "the cage"—was broken to pieces with an English hammer, and down a strong rope made of twisted silk slid the lieutenant and a slender girl of about sixteen years, whom he held in the grasp of his right arm. All that she had brought away with her (and it was her own) she wore upon her person. She had no attendants in her train. Not a single soul was in her confidence, or aware of her flight until she had been gone for more than five hours. When the discovery was made and the alarm given, a search was made in every direction—but to no purpose. She was

then in the company of her deliverer, and on her way out of the dominions of the Maharajah, disguised as a boy. When the Colonel—then a lieutenant—carried her off, the Ranee was like, in person and in disposition, her daughter Shereenee. It was not until after her marriage that the small-pox had robbed her features of their great beauty.

The young lieutenant became so much interested in his “bird,” as she was wont to call herself, that at length he loved her as much as she loved him, and he was married to her by a missionary at Dehra Dhoon, who baptized the bride immediately before the performance of the marriage ceremony.

How fervent must be the love of a Hindoo woman—a Brahmin by caste—who sacrifices her religion for the sake of a man! It was not for the sake of her liberty—for to her imprisonment was no great punishment—that the Ranee left the palace: it was solely for the sake of her love that she longed to be free. No one in India—that is to say, no European, save the missionary who married them—was aware of this adventure of Lieutenant Ornsbie; and it was not until after the birth of Leonora—by which time the lieutenant had become rich—that her relations were aware of the facts—that she was still alive, and was the wife of a British officer; and, for their own sakes, they were anxious to conceal, rather than give publicity to, the truth, which, in their opinion, would have brought disgrace upon the royal house to which the Ranee belonged.

But although the young girl had changed her religion, she did not change her habits or her style of dress. Save in her religion, she was in every respect a native lady, and lived as native ladies usually live. The little English that she spoke she had acquired after Leonora

was old enough to converse with her father, who by this time was a captain. So very adroitly did Ornsbie manage, that not a soul in his regiment had any suspicion of the truth; and after he became rich, and could afford to keep up several establishments in the plains, as well as his house in the hills, concealment was a very easy matter. The Rante, of course, had no desire to move about except in a native carriage, which screened her from view, while it admitted of her seeing as much of the outside world as she desired to see. Colonel Ornsbie was not the only British officer who married a native lady. Several had done so before him. His case, however, differed from theirs in being kept a close secret. It may have been that he was not prepared to brave the opinion of the services and of society, which would have been adverse, of course, to such an union; or it may have been that, although he could excuse it to himself, he did not wish to be at the trouble of entering into particulars with those who might possibly expect some explanation. In his domestic affairs, from their commencement up to the time of the scene laid in the last chapter, the Colonel had been extremely happy—and happy even in the circumstance that the boy and the girl (Shereenee) were as unmistakably Asiatic as was the eldest (Leonora) European. Their appearance before him, as pure Mahrattas—living as Mahrattas, and dressing as Mahrattas—was not a source of pain to him; but it would have been otherwise had they been what is called in India “Muteesa,” which signifies “neither European nor native”—in short, “half-caste.”

Several natives of rank and influence in India were in possession of the facts touching the marriage of the Colonel, and amongst them was the Baboo who was introduced to the reader in an earlier stage of this

story ; and it was he who, acting as the agent of the Ranee, claimed and recovered from a native prince a very large sum of money—something like twenty lacs of rupees—£200,000 sterling—with all of which the Colonel speculated. Amongst the jewels which the Ranee brought away with her from her home was the ring which has so often been alluded to in this narrative.

CHAPTER XL.

RUMOURS OF WARS.

CONTENDING passions and feelings would not suffer Reckless to sleep during the remainder of the night of his interview with Leonora. The tableau—for such it appeared to his imagination—was constantly before his eyes. The forbidding features of that boy, the face of Shereenee, and the form of the Ranee, clothed in white and covered with precious stones,—all that scene was barbaric in the extreme ; and he shuddered several times while contemplating it. Then the scene shifted, and he saw Leonora seated in her drawing-room, surrounded by her birds, and flowers of the choicest description. This part of the picture he dwelt upon with joy and rapture ; but the dark faces would again obtrude themselves, and distract the young soldier. He now felt the force of all Leonora's objections to be his until he had seen another race of people besides his own, and he appreciated to the full her sense of justice in wishing him to *see* rather than *hear* the whole truth. No tongue could possibly have

described to him the startling reality which his eyes had beheld that night. Much as he admired, and much as he loved Leonora, it was still an open question with Reckless, whether—when he reflected on the dark side of the picture—he would again press her to fulfil her engagement. There was no one with whom he could advise—not even his friend West; for Leonora had made him pledge his most sacred word and honour that he would not disclose to any one in India what had passed between them, or allude to what he had seen that night.

The day dawned, and he arose from his couch unrefreshed in body and perplexed in spirit. The post came in, and his servant gave him a letter. He tore open the seal, and read as follows:—

“DEAR RECKLESS,—Here is some news for you. The whole of the Meerut force is to move upwards immediately, for the Governor-General's agent on the frontier has written to say that the Seiks will certainly invade our territories. We—the G.-G. and all the staff—leave Calcutta next week for the Upper Provinces. There will be some hard fighting. I have a presentiment on that head. Depend upon it, we shall take the field in December. How about that romantic affair of yours? Give my love to West.

“Ever yours,

“ARTHUR PLANTAGENET.

“Augustus Reckless, Esq., — Dragoons.”

This letter was a relief to Reckless. It diverted, to some extent, his thoughts from the subject which had kept him awake all night. He mounted his charger, went to parade, and made known the substance of Plantagenet's letter. It was news, indeed; and before

twelve o'clock the whole station was in great commotion, and Reckless's bungalow literally besieged with inquirers. Even Major Sudor, the General's A.D.C., had driven up to know the particulars; for the General had not yet received any information, nor had he been requested to hold the forces in readiness. Striking out and obliterating the words—"How about that romantic affair of yours?"—Reckless permitted his visitors to read Major Plantagenet's epistle.

While it was in the hands of Major Sudor, who was committing the precise words to memory, a note was given to Reckless by one of his servants. It was from Leonora, and ran thus:—

"DEAREST AUGUSTUS,—My father cannot leave his home, or he would call upon you. He wishes very much to speak with you. Come to the end room in which you found him yesterday."

Reckless immediately ordered his palanquin, and was carried to the door of the end room, where stood in the verandah an orderly, who announced and showed him in to the Colonel.

"My dear sir," exclaimed the Colonel, seizing Reckless by the hand, "you must write off instantly to the editor of the *Gazette* that is published at Delhi, and request him not to give a place to any letters from this station containing the information which is now all over Meerut, on the authority of the Governor-General's military secretary, in a letter to your address. I knew that an order would appear shortly for us to march, and have made my arrangements accordingly. But I was bound to keep my knowledge to myself, for I had it direct from the Governor-General's agent, in a letter marked "strictly private

and confidential." If this news gets abroad in the papers, you will have the enemy prepare himself accordingly; and so far as you are concerned personally, you will find it rather disagreeable to see yourself in type as the vehicle of the communication to the public—native and European. Besides, your friend, Major Plantagenet, whose name will be given up, most probably, will feel somewhat annoyed, and possibly incur the Governor-General's displeasure. The interest that I take in your welfare is the only excuse that I have to offer for schooling you in this fashion; and I certainly hope that you will take my advice, and write at once."

"I will, Colonel," said Reckless. "I will write by to-day's post; and I am very much obliged to you for the suggestion."

"I am not sorry for this war," continued the Colonel, "though it will interfere with my private affairs. In times of peace, I am weary of military duties; but on active service, I love the profession of arms. It is such a wholesome occupation. How many sabres do you muster in your regiment? 750?"

"Well, to tell you the honest truth, sir, I don't know. I have not taken any very particular interest in soldiering."

"But you must do so *now*," said the Colonel. "It is a good regiment, that of yours, and well officered; and if it has another opportunity, it will distinguish itself as much as it has always done, when engaged with an enemy."

"I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing Miss Ornsbie."

"Yes; but you have something else to think of now besides love affairs. They must be placed in abeyance

until the campaign is over. Like many other affairs, they are all very well in their way, until something more exciting turns up. See her? Oh, yes! you shall see her, presently—you shall see her making preparations for my march.” The Colonel spoke with a vigour and matter-of-factness which rather startled Reckless, who was not quite prepared for so much military ardour and enthusiasm in a man whose mind had hitherto been so engrossed with mercantile affairs and the business of this life.

“Do you think we shall move soon, sir?” he ventured to ask.

“Yes,” replied the Colonel; “within three days. To-night the General will receive his orders to that effect. It is no insignificant enemy, but a very powerful and large army, that we are going forth to meet; and it is fortunate for us that the European officers, Frenchmen and Italians, who trained them and drilled them, will not lead them. We shall be opposed to an army—a very brave army—without a head, or a commander worthy of the name. Very many of us will never come back, Mr. Reckless. Thank God, I have nothing to do with the black regiments. All my men are like ourselves, and I can trust them.” (And well Colonel Ornsbie might—seeing that the Bengal Horse Artillery, of which he commanded a brigade, was unsurpassed, if equalled, by any body of soldiers in the whole world.)

* * * * *

Reckless saw Leonora. He also saw the Ranee, who was in sore distress at the idea of the Colonel going to the wars; for the Brahmins [notwithstanding she was a Christian, she often consulted them, perhaps as much from habit as for charity] assured her that he would

never return. (It is impossible not to admire the candour which characterizes the vaticinations of the Indian prophets. Handsomely remunerated as they often are for their predictions, they rarely or never consult the wishes or the feelings of those who employ them, but speak what is uppermost in their minds during their moments of imagined inspiration.) Sheereenee also was in great distress, in consequence of this prophecy, and sat in a corner of the Ranees apartment absorbed in her grief. Reckless did not see "the Maharajah Bahadoor" (as the son of Colonel Ornsbie was called in the household). He had gone to Jhansee, hoping in his heart that the race to which his own father belonged would be extirpated in the coming war.

CHAPTER XLI.

A DIVISION ON THE MARCH.

THE order came :—"The Meerut force to move upward." And upward it moved. There was the Dragoon regiment, gallantly commanded by its renowned Colonel ; the two regiments of British Foot, the Bengal Horse Artillery, and the Native Cavalry and Infantry—a small army, in fact—under the command of Major-General Sir John Gay. Sir John did not appear to know, or to care, where the force was marching to, or what was the object of the march. His chief anxiety was about his own personal comforts ; and all his conversation with his A.D.C. on the first day thereto related. He was very much put out when he learnt that there were no smoked tongues (to which he was

very partial) amongst the provisions, and asked at least a dozen officers whether they thought he could get some further up the country. He was also greatly provoked when informed that the brass fender and polished steel fire-irons belonging to his tent stove had been left behind; and insisted on their being sent for immediately. Sir John, in his younger days, had been a brave and intelligent regimental officer, and he was still as brave as ever; but his intellect was all gone. He was not *quite* childish, but hovering on childishness, and selfish to a degree that nothing but his advanced years could possibly have excused. It is needless, perhaps, to say that he had never commanded a division previously to going to India, for he had been twenty-eight years on half-pay before he thought of a command in the East; and during these twenty-eight years, he had devoted himself to agriculture, and other pursuits equally peaceful and praiseworthy.

The Governor-General overtook the Division of Sir John Gay; and in accordance with his promise, he received as extra aides-de-camp on his staff, Reckless and West, who had by this time made the personal acquaintance of every officer in the Meerut Division, and who were therefore likely to be of some use in the discharge of their duties in the forthcoming campaign.

Nothing particular occurred until the 15th of December, when the Sepoys, at a place called Cherruk, taking advantage of our position, *demand*ed that, as they were making forced marches, and as they had not time to cook their food properly, they should be compensated; and not only was this demand complied with, but the General Order making the fact known, began thus:—
“The Governor-General has observed with much admiration the exemplary patience with which the native

troops," &c. The truth was, that the brutes were grumbling, if not clamorous. However, what was to be done? Ferozepore was in danger. The Seiks had crossed the Sutlej in immense force, and were surrounding it. No time was to be lost. This order appeared on the day previous to the battle of Moodkee, which battle, inasmuch as our hero took an active part in it, we may as well describe in our own way. (Sir Edward Ferret had placed the services of Captain Reckless and several other officers on his staff at the disposal of Sir Hugh Bluff, the Commander-in-Chief.) On the 18th of December, at about half-past twelve, when our troops were greatly exhausted, and chiefly from want of water, which was only to be procured on the line of march in very small quantities, information was received that the Seik army was advancing to oppose us. We had barely time to get under arms and take up a position, when the fact was ascertained beyond all question. The enemy's force consisted of twenty thousand infantry, eighteen thousand horse, and fifty-one guns; and they were advancing in the order of battle.

Our force consisted of a division under Sir Harry Smith, a division under Sir John M'Caskill, and a division under General Gilbert; five troops of Horse Artillery, and two light field-batteries, under Colonel Brooke, of the Horse Artillery; and a cavalry division, consisting of the 3rd Dragoons, the Governor-General's body-guard (at the head of which was Major Dawkins), 4th and 5th Light Cavalry, and the 9th Irregular Cavalry. We were encamped in the front of Moodkee, where there was a village and a small fort.

To resist the attack of the enemy, and to cover the formation of the infantry, Sir Hugh Bluff advanced the

cavalry rapidly to the front, in columns of squadrons, and occupied the whole plain. Then followed the Horse Artillery, which took up a forward position, both flanks covered by the cavalry.

The country is a level plain, covered with a low jungle (resembling in some respects a heath); and here and there were sandy hillocks.

West, coinciding entirely with Sir Edward Ferret, was of opinion that it would have been better had we waited for them; but Reckless thought that the Commander-in-Chief was quite right in giving them distinctly to understand, in the first instance, that we intended to turn them out of our territories, and follow them into their own, with as little delay as possible.

Whilst our battalions of infantry were forming into line, the enemy opened a very heavy cannonade on our advancing troops, which was replied to by our horse and foot artillery—and vigorously too; but in that arm we were nothing like equal to them. Most of their guns were of very heavy calibre.

“Captain Reckless! come here, please!” cried Sir Hugh. “Just ride down, if you will be so good, and tell Brigadier White and Brigadier Gough that I’ll thank ’em if they will make a flank movement, with a view of turning their flank, if possible, or at all events of threatening it.”

“Yes, your Excellency,” said Reckless; and putting spurs to his horse, he was soon by the side of Brigadier White, to whom he communicated the chief’s message. “I think we can manage that,” said the Brigadier, smiling; “though it is rather a stiff business. Third Dragoons!” (The Brigadier was the Colonel of this distinguished regiment. He had commanded it for

several years, and was respected by both the officers and the men.)

A low murmur ran through the regiment—a murmur of satisfaction, expressive of readiness. Every horse was held well in hand—every sabre grasped with a firm hand. They were, indeed, “like greyhounds on the slip, waiting for the start.”

“Charge!” cried the old Brigadier, in a voice of thunder, galloping ahead of the regiment, followed by Reckless. “Charge! Third Dragoons!”

And the Third Dragoons did charge! And a more glorious and daring charge was never made by British cavalry. They turned the enemy’s left—sweeping along the whole rear of his infantry and guns—silencing the latter for a while, and putting to flight the dense masses of his cavalry.

And now the infantry advanced, and the Horse Artillery pushed forward close to the jungle. A heavy cannonading commenced on both sides. Our infantry, in echelon of lines, attacked the infantry of the Seik army, which was scarcely visible amongst the jungle; and night was coming on. The enemy fought desperately; and their long line, from the vast superiority of their numbers, far outflanked ours; but this was counteracted by the flank movements of our cavalry. The roll of the fire of our infantry now began in earnest, but it did not last long. Sir Hugh was impatient that they should taste “the cold stayle”—or, to use other of his own words in one of his despatches, “that never-failing weapon, the bayonet, in the hands of a British soldier.”

Weary with long marching, and parched with thirst, the British Foot—flanked by the Sepoys, who did not

behave ill, but well, on the occasion—charged the whole force opposed to them, and drove them from their position with great slaughter, capturing seventeen of their guns. By the dim starlight, and half-blinded by the dust, which now obscured every object, this desperate encounter was prolonged for two hours.

Wherever the danger was thickest, there was Sir Hugh and there was Sir Edward Ferret (the former in his uniform, and his plumed cocked-hat, and his orders on his breast; the latter in his white tile and his pea-coat), cheering on the troops, each in his own peculiar way.

“At ’em—at ’em!” shouted a voice, which no Irishman in this world could mistake—and most of the men were Irish—“Give it ’em, 50th, 80th, 9th; brave 9th; don’t spare one atom—not an atom. At ’em!—at ’em! Well done, Saypoys!—well done! You are noble fellows. We’ll teach ’em!—we’ll teach these Sakes! That’s right—at ’em!—at ’em!” And every now and then was heard the voice of a Highlander, who was acting as adjutant-general of the forces. Sir Harry Smith bravely led his Division; but talked, perhaps (so little West thought), far too much. General Gilbert said little; but that little was very impressive, and to the purpose. Sir John M’Caskill, who, from age and fatigue, was unequal to much exertion, was killed during the advance; a ball entered his chest, and he expired almost immediately. His last words, which were addressed to an officer, who dismounted to assist the old warrior, were very characteristic of him. “Thank you. You can do me no good. Go on with the force!”

Sir Robert Sale also received his death wound in

this battle, and many other gallant men fell—fell like soldiers in the service of their country :—

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest,
By all their country's wishes blest !

As was written of them at the time :—“ Thus sleep they ! And if a wish should come over the minds of those who survive, that their ashes should have mingled with the soil of their native earth, let us be satisfied that they fell in the discharge of their duty, and that the field that has witnessed the last acts of a soldier's daring is no unfit resting-place for his mortal remains. Their spirits are with Him who gave them, and their earthly fame safe in the records of History.”

Our entire loss, in killed, at this battle, was 215 of all ranks ; wounded, 657—forming a grand total of killed and wounded, 872. Amongst the latter was Reckless, who received a bullet in the fleshy part of his left arm, which he was obliged to wear in a sling for some days afterwards. West, too, was grazed sufficiently to be returned as wounded. They were both repeatedly thanked upon the field by the Chief for the service they had rendered him—Reckless especially ; but the Chief administered a little rebuke to him in a very kind and good-humoured manner.

“ Captain Reckless,” said the Chief, “ should you again do me the favour to carry a message to a Brigadier to charge, you will be so good as to return, instead of staying to charge along with him.”

“ I will, your Excellency ; but the truth is, I had never seen a charge of cavalry, and my curiosity and my feelings got entirely the better of me.”

“ Ah ! By-the-bye, you never could have been under fire before. In that case, there's every excuse to be

made for you ; but in future bear in mind what I tell you,—if Sir Edward should be so kind as to place you at my disposal once more ”

* * * * *

For several hours after the battle was over, the force bivouacked on the field, and did not move towards its encampment ground until it had been ascertained there was no enemy before it. In the darkness it would have been impossible to pursue the enemy. Besides, our troops, officers and men, were literally exhausted with fatigue, and hunger, and thirst. How they fought as they did was a miracle. The excitement alone, doubtless, nerved the mind, and sustained the body to exert itself while the fight was going on. One of the officers of the Governor-General's staff was “missing,” and Reckless, West, and several others set out to search for him—to find him, if possible, dead or alive. This was the most horrible part of the whole affair. While the battle raged and cannon roared, and the roll of musketry was heard on all sides,—while that deafening din lasted, and the air was filled with smoke and dust, and no man could say that his life was safe for a second—painful as it was to see a friend, an officer, or private soldier fall, killed or wounded—still, so great was the excitement, that the heart had no time to throb with pity. But it was now otherwise. The din had ceased—the dust had settled—the bright stars shone brightly in the clear blue heavens, and the moans of the wounded and the dying came awfully upon the ear—while the sight was sickened to behold our own wounded soldiers and those of the enemy, as well as the dead of both sides, lying so close to each other. At the muzzles of the guns the horrible sight was the most ghastly ; the Artillerymen had stood to

be bayoneted and cut to pieces rather than retire from them, even after the infantry and cavalry had fled.

In their search, Reckless and West came upon parties of the 3rd, looking for comrades, and at the same time pulling down the long back hair of the Seik officers and soldiers who had fallen in the fight. In this long back hair the Seiks carried their gold and silver coin, and such other valuables as they possessed. There were also parties of soldiers belonging to the British regiments of foot, each party carrying a lantern. It was very dreadful to hear some of these men discourse on the scene; but, at the same time, it was no easy matter to refrain from laughing when listening to others. Even West, who reproved Reckless for his levity, could not help on one occasion giving way. Two men of the 50th were conversing in a very rich Milesian dialect—

“By the powers, Corney, just look here!” cried one. “Here is a fine fellow lying flat on his back; that fellow was fairly shot. Devil a bit of a coward in *him*!”

“How the devil do you know that? Why, didn’t he run away?”

“Not a bit of it. If he’d been running away, he’d have got the ball in his back, and would have fallen flat on his face; but whenever you see a man lying on the ground, flat on his back, and with his arms out like that, you may be sure that he took it in frontways, like a man.”

“Faith, there’s reason in that, Mick. It never occurred to me before to think of that. And now I *do* come to think, there might be some of those native Light Cavalry gentlemen will be ashamed to ask the doctors to dress their wounds. I touched one fellow up. I saw him jump in his saddle.”

"What! Did you fire at him?"

"Didn't I, though! I saw him charging away in a wrong direction, and several other fellows following him; so I sent him a little messenger to say it was not altogether safe in *that* quarter of the field. What a time you are, Corney, untying this brave man's hair. Here's a knife for you; cut it."

"There! there it is! And, by the powers, here's a heap!"

It was certainly a good haul. They divided no less than seventy gold mohurs—equal to £112 or £120. The dead Seik was an officer.

The Staff officer who was missing, was found stretched upon the plain some distance in advance of where Sir Robert Sale fell at the close of the day. He was not dead, nor wounded, but fearfully bruised, and unable to walk, or even stand. A round shot had killed his horse, which lay by his side, and after that he had been ridden over and trampled upon. He could not speak when found, so parched were his lips. This was the first time that Reckless had felt justified in unscrewing the top of the silver flask which his brother the lawyer had given to him. Oft-times in the day had he longed for a few drops of that liquid; but he abstained, by reason of the fact that his necessity was not so dire as to warrant his tasting it even. It was a sweet feeling to Reckless to observe how a tea-spoonful revived his exhausted friend, whom Reckless carried off the field on his back.

"Thanks, dear Reckless," said the bruised officer; "I have endured more agony of mind than a thousand deaths could contain. Picture yourself stunned by a horse rolling over you—sick and faint, yet in possession of your faculties—seeing the line advancing, and

knowing full well that they would trample over, and crush the life out of you ; or if you survived, that the chances were you would lie there, in the darkness, unable to speak or move, and perish of the bitter cold during the night, or before assistance could be afforded you in the morning. At half-past eight o'clock I had given up all hope, and wished it speedily over."

"Horrible! horrible!" said Reckless. "But I suppose we must take our chance of these things."

Reckless had now imbibed a passion for battles, and more strongly than ever "pooh-pooed" West's idea of generalship, and approved entirely of that of Sir Hugh. Reckless, indeed, was of opinion—and a great many officers of ability and experience agreed with him—that the charge of the Third Dragoons had a great effect upon the enemy throughout the whole campaign ; and that, had it not been for that daring, glorious, and successful charge, the enemy would have been less shy of us, and would have attacked us the next day in greater numbers, and before the 29th Foot and the 1st Fusiliers joined the force, when, considering our severe losses on the 18th, it would have been difficult to say what the consequences might have been. Perhaps we should have been compelled to entrench ourselves ; for the chief would never have retired, having said so often that "his bones should bleach upon the plains, before he would move a yard backward in the face of an Asiatic foe."

CHAPTER XLII.

MORE OF WAR.

THE day after the battle of Moodkee, Sir Edward Ferret placed his services at the disposal of Sir Hugh Bluff, in a military point of view, and Sir Hugh accordingly appointed Sir Edward as second in command of the army—committing to his care the entire direction and charge of the left wing thereof, while he, Sir Hugh, personally held charge and direction of the right wing. During the day—the 19th—information was received that the enemy, in immense force—say 100,000 men—with 150 pieces of heavy cannon, were moving on to attack our comparatively small force. Every preparation was made to receive them, but they did not come. The vigorous style in which they had been received at Moodkee had (as their chiefs afterwards admitted in Lahore) inspired them with a dread of acting on the offensive. Brave as they were, they went away after Moodkee, and entrenched themselves at Ferozeshah—one hundred thousand of them, and one hundred and fifty pieces of ordnance of enormous calibre. The only addition that was made to the forces of the British was the arrival of Her Majesty's 29th Foot, the 1st Bengal (European) Fusiliers, and a few heavy guns.

On the morning of the 21st, Sir Hugh, "impatient to get at 'em"—an impatience which was shared by the whole force—resumed the offensive. Instead of moving, however, in a direct line to attack the enemy in his entrenched position, a movement was made to the left—between the Seiks and Ferozepore.

This movement, happily conceived and admirably executed, effected the great object which the Commander-in-Chief had in view. A cloud of dust was seen in the distance. It was the force at Ferozepore, under Sir John Littler, who had seized the opportunity of uniting the troops under his command with the main body of the army. This junction was effected amidst immense cheering; for the most serious fears were entertained for the safety of the comparatively small force at Ferozepore—consisting, as it did, of only one regiment of European soldiers (H.M.'s 62nd Foot), two regiments of Native Infantry—a regiment of cavalry, and a proportionate amount of artillery. Why the Seiks failed to attack this small force is inexplicable, since they passed it, and moved down to Moodkee to attack in the open plain a force so vastly superior in numbers. Could it have been that they made sure of the garrison of Ferozepore after crushing the British army? However, let us not speculate on such matters.

Dispositions were now made for an attack on the enemy's entrenched camp. It was a parallelogram of about one mile in length and half a mile broad or deep. Within this parallelogram was situated the village of Ferozeshah. On the one side was situated the river Sutlej and Moodkee; on the other was Ferozepore and the open country. It was against the last-named force of the position that the attack was made. The ground resembled that at Moodkee, and was covered with a low jungle and hillocks of sand, formed by the furious dust storms which sweep over that country in the months of May and June.

The divisions of Generals Littler, Gilbert, and Wallace—the last-named having succeeded Sir John

M'Caskill—deployed into line, having in the centre the whole of the Artillery, except three troops of Horse Artillery, which were kept in reserve, to be moved as occasion might require. Sir Harry Smith's division and a small cavalry force, moved in second line, having a brigade in reserve to cover each wing.

And now the enemy opened on the advancing troops a heavy cannonade from about one hundred guns, which were brought to bear upon us. Their fire was rapid and well directed. Our less numerous artillery, and principally light field-pieces, did its best, but could not silence, and scarcely seemed to check it. Storms of shot and shell now poured into our advancing infantry, who staggered under it, but still went on—officer after officer fell; brigadiers, colonels, majors, captains, lieutenants, ensigns, non-commissioned officers; while whole companies of regiments were swept down *en masse*. Every officer (except one) on the staff of the Governor-General received a gun-shot wound; some were killed, and others wounded; while those on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief were scarcely more fortunate. How the chiefs who were in the thick of it escaped is miraculous; several of their aides-de-camp were struck while receiving messages. Reckless was with Sir Hugh, who had the right wing; West was with the Governor-General, who had the left wing. On one occasion they met. Both were galloping towards Sir Harry Smith's division, each bearing a message to that General.

"Holloa, West!" shouted Reckless; "what do you think of this?"

"Oh! it is glorious," said West. "But I wish I had not lost the top of my middle finger—it is so inconvenient, as well as painful."

"And I'm hit somewhere, but I don't know where—

for there's a lot of blood running into one of my boots. I suppose I shall find it out by-and-bye."

Having delivered their respective messages, they were returning, when Reckless proposed to West to ride down the front of the advancing line.

"No," said West, dogmatically; "there is quite sufficient danger in any part of the field, without *inviting* death. I cannot see any wit in such a proceeding. Besides, I have a duty to perform; and duty, remember, must be our first consideration, Reckless.

"Although you are on pleasure bent,
Pray have a prudent mind!"

"Nonsense! Come along, West!"

"No. Good morning! This is my direction; that is yours."

"Well, I'll speak to Plantagenet," said Reckless; "and so I'll accompany you, and then get from your wing to my own in the way I have proposed—that is, by riding down in front of the line."

"You had better not."

"Why?"

"If you come with me you will find it out."

And Reckless did find it out; for Sir Edward asked him if he had brought any message from the Chief, and on being replied to in the negative, he struck his stump, and said, impetuously, "Then get back, sir, as speedily as possible!"

Putting spurs to his horse, Reckless cantered along the line, pulling up in front of the various Royal regiments, and listening to their various colonels or majors in command animating their men, but entreating them to be steady, and not to fire. He saw several distinguished field officers fall, and their places immediately

supplied by the next in command; he saw several regiments stagger and reel under the awful discharge of round shot and grape which the enemy's guns belched forth. But they stood, and tried their best to get on—like a man who faces and tries to make headway against a hurricane accompanied by hail and sleet. One regiment of Foot, misled by the sound of a bugle, turned, and came past the 9th Foot, who were advancing in support, and had formed square temporarily, being threatened by the enemy's cavalry. Into this square Sir John Littler rode, and made sundry exclamations, which gave great offence to the officers of the regiment which retired. One of those exclamations (made in ignorance of the fact that the bugle had been sounded to retreat—Sir John nor any of his staff having heard the bugle) was this—"Oh, God! 9th Foot!—If I had had the old 39th with me, as I had at Maharajpore, this would not have happened! I should not have been deserted by my division! Oh, God! oh, God!" And the old soldier wept, and threw his gloves on the ground.

"Holloa! my dear Reckless," cried a well-known voice, "are *you* here? They mourn you dead on the Chief's side of the way. Tremendous fire—is it not? Here comes a shell! Where will that fall? Right in the centre of the 29th. Yes. Look—there's a gap for you! But, see, they are closing up. Bravo, 29th!"

"This is the best view of the whole business," said Reckless.

"By far," said Major Plantagenet. "The natives are behaving very well. But do you observe that the cunning dogs—those Seiks—direct their fire almost exclusively on the European forces? They appear to despise the blacks. See, there's another shell! Where will that

fall? Right into the 53rd! Well, I must be off. That's a very nice animal you are on, Reckless. God bless you, my dear boy!" And Major Plantagenet galloped down to where the Governor-General was posted.

"This is hotter than *Albuera*," said the Governor-General. "It is by far the heaviest fire I ever saw."

This speech was addressed to a Prince who was travelling under the name of Count Ravensburg (a descendant of Frederick the Great, of Prussia), an illustrious nobleman, who, with his *suite*, Counts Grueten and Oriola, and his medical attendant, Dr. Hoffmeister, was travelling in the East when the war with the Seiks broke out, and who requested permission to be present on the field of battle, which was, of course, granted.

The Count witnessed the battle with great calmness, and several times expressed his admiration of the extraordinary valour of the British infantry, and that of the Sepoys, who fought in the same cause. The doctor (Hoffmeister), a very clever and worthy man, was struck from his horse while in the act of speaking to his Royal Highness—the Count. A round shot had killed him. The Count instantly alighted, and took the doctor in his arms. But he was dead, and beyond all sympathy. And now our men were at the guns of the enemy,—at the muzzles of them,—and bayoneting the Artillerymen; but the Seik Infantry, which had been drawn up in the rear of the guns, discharged such volleys, and kept up the fire so rapidly, that in spite of the most heroic efforts, a small portion only of the entrenchment could be carried.

By this time, the light of day had disappeared, and night had closed in. But still the battle raged in every direction.

"Captain Reckless," cried Sir Hugh, "go down, and tell Sir Harry Smith to bring up his Division—as fast as he pleases. But, no! Stay! I'll go myself." And off the Chief galloped, followed by his staff.

Up came Sir Harry's Division, and captured, and for a while retained, a portion of the entrenchments; and (foreign nations may discredit it, but it is true) the 3rd Dragoons charged, and took several of the most formidable batteries! How they got in, even Reckless could never comprehend. But it is certain that they *did* get in, and that when in, they sabred away right and left—cutting down gunners and infantry, who fled before them, shouting—

"Moodkeewallas, aya!" ("The Moodkee men have come")—proving incontestibly how great had been the effect of that memorable charge which opened the campaign, or which was, rather, its first and most eminent feature, so far as military exploits were concerned. Nevertheless, the Seiks remained the masters of a large portion of their position, while our troops held the remainder. The fighting still went on for several hours; but at last—exhausted by their desperate efforts—their numbers awfully reduced, and suffering frightfully from thirst, the firing upon us ceased, and the army bivouacked upon the ground it gained so gallantly, and at so great a cost of life.

It was an awful night; and most fervently did all pray for daylight. There was a young moon, but she did not befriend us, for she showed the Seiks our exact position; and at one a.m. they brought to bear upon it a monster gun, which they loaded nearly to the muzzle with small round shot, and canister, and grape. This gun they advanced considerably, and it played upon our troops with the most deadly effect.

"This will never do," said Sir Edward Ferret, striking his stump; and whilst he spoke, an A.D.C., who was standing by his side, was struck by a round shot and killed upon the spot. "We must have that gun. Let the 80th Foot and the 1st⁴ Fusileers stand to their arms!" With incredible rapidity the order was obeyed—and the two regiments received from Sir Edward the order to "Charge that battery!" There was no going to the right or to the left. The gun was charged in front. Colonel Wood, a relation of Sir Edward's, and Colonel Bunbury, led the attack. Quietly as possible, they approached the deadly monster, which was well served by relays of the most expert and experienced artillerymen, and well guarded by regiments of infantry. When they were within a short distance, they made a rush. A desperate fight ensued, but it lasted only a short time. When it was over, the gun was in our possession. All that could be then done, *was* done. The monster was spiked, and for the remainder of the night he did no further execution. This was also a very brilliant feature in the campaign.

During the remainder of the night, however, the Seiks kept up their fire upon us at intervals. Every now and then would come a shot or a shell plunging or growling, and killing and wounding some of the British troops; but, comparatively speaking, all was quiet, if such a word may be used in describing such a scene.

The day began to dawn. The old Chief, who had not slept or partaken of food for very many hours previously, gave the command for the Infantry to "Form line!" The flanks were supported by Horse Artillery and Cavalry. Our few heavy guns which remained effective were in the centre, and opened a fire; but at Ferozeshah this arm of our service was overmatched, and did but

little execution. A masked battery of the Seiks played upon our guns, dislodged them from their carriages, and blew up the tumbrils! •

Sir Edward Ferret, surrounded by his disabled and wounded staff, placed himself at the head of the left wing; Sir Hugh Bluff—nearly the whole of his staff badly wounded—at the head of the right. “Forward! Forward! Forward!” was the word from one end of the line to the other. Numbers fell, and many a gap was observed for a moment; but the ranks closed up and advanced with a cheer, desperate and deafening as had become the fire, which was now unceasing. Into the village of Ferozeshah, and the encampment of the enemy, penetrated this mass of “living valour, rolling on the foe;” capturing seventy-five of their guns, and driving their opponents from the field of which they were now the masters. The line then halted and stood “at ease.” And down the line rode Sir Hugh and Sir Edward, followed by their respective staffs, now woefully diminished in numbers. Reckless was looking as pale as a corpse from the loss of blood, for his old wound had begun to bleed afresh, and his new one in the thigh, though bandaged with a handkerchief, would not “leave off,” to use Reckless’s own words. West also looked ill and faint, as did several others, if not all. The line, from end to end, cheered the chiefs as they passed down it, staying at the centre of every regiment to congratulate their commanding officers, who displayed the captured standards of the army of the late Runjeet Singh.

It was a great victory; but it was purchased at a great, though inevitable loss. Amongst the staff of the Governor-General alone, the ravages had been fearful. Poor Herries, who died on the night of the

18th, at Moodkee, was sadly missed and grieved for; but now they had to deplore the loss of Munro and of Hore, and (alas!) Plantagenet was dying! This was the most severe stroke of all, for Arthur Plantagenet was endeared to all who knew him; men, women, and children—persons of every age, rank, and condition—loved the man. His handsome person—his courteous and graceful manners—his kind heart and humane disposition—his utter unselfishness—his strict sense of honour—his unflinching integrity in thought, word, or deed—his heroic spirit—his powers of conversation, which were immense—his unaffectedness—his love for all mankind—his disinclination to believe ill of any one—his passion to do, from uninterested motives, a favour for any one who needed his assistance—were qualities and ingredients that made up the man who died (to quote the words of the despatch which recorded his loss) “while conducting himself with all the hereditary courage of his race.” He was always foremost where difficulties were to be overcome, and was cheering on the troops, on the evening of the 21st of December, when he received a grape shot, which passed through the right arm into the lungs, and proved fatal on the third day afterwards. Thus was closed a brief, but brilliant, military career. He had received four severe wounds at the battle of Maharajpore, and, for several acts of individual heroism, was promoted to the brevet rank of Major. He had a desperate personal encounter with several Mahratta soldiers, while endeavouring to bring off the field the body of General Churchill, when that officer had fallen mortally wounded.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BATTLE OF ALIWAŁ.

So severe were the losses on the part of the British at the battle of Ferozeshah, that we were unable to follow the enemy to Sobraon, where he took up and fortified a position on the left bank of the Sutlej, in front of the main body of our army. The Meerut force, under Sir John Gay, had not yet joined, nor had the siege train arrived. This was to Reckless, as well as to many others, the most tedious part of the whole campaign. Towards the end of the month (of January), however, there was something to be done in the field. Sir Harry Smith was sent with his Division to attack a Seik Sirdar, Rungoor Singh, who was at the head of a large force, with considerable artillery, and reported to be moving into the rear of the British army. Reckless at once asked permission of Sir Edward to accompany this force; and he was the more anxious to do so as a part of it was the regiment to which he belonged, and he wished to be with it, and share in whatever glory it might gain in the field.

Sir Edward was not in a very good humour with this request, and replied, rather sharply—"No, sir! you don't suppose that I am to be made a convenience of—do you?" But, on observing the disappointment which settled itself on the features of Reckless, Sir Edward relented, and very kindly said—"Very well; I will not deprive you of the chance of distinguishing yourself *with your regiment*." And so Reckless once more had to put aside the captain, and become (what he now was) a lieutenant. The British troops (European)

under Sir Harry consisted of the 16th Light Dragoon Regiment (Lancers); the 31st, 50th, and 53rd Foot; and a brigade of Horse Artillery.

At a place called Buddewall, by an accident, the whole of our baggage fell into the hands of the enemy, and the scarcity of clean linen became very serious indeed. Amongst other things that were lost, were the medical stores and most of the surgical instruments. "Never shall I forget," said Reckless, in a letter to West, "the joy with which the Artillery Doctor (Craigie) received from my hands the little case which my brother gave me on leaving England. Many a wound did those needles sew up, and many a limb did that little saw and those knives take off—saving many a life."

At daylight on the 28th of January, Sir Harry gave the orders—

"Cavalry to the front! in contiguous columns of squadrons of regiments! Two troops of Horse Artillery in the interval of brigades! The Infantry in contiguous columns of brigades, at intervals of deploying distance! Artillery in the intervals, followed by the howitzers."

In this order the troops moved forward, the advance conducted by Captain Waugh, of the 16th Lancers—a brave and excellent officer; but who is at this present time in Spain, and too ill to return to this country, notwithstanding the pressing invitations of the Commissioners in Bankruptcy. What a strange thing that a man who so signally distinguished himself on the field of battle—who could go into action as coolly and as calmly as he would go to breakfast—should be frightened to face an elderly gentleman, in a white horse-hair wig, a rusty black silk gown, and with no other

weapon in his hand than a goose-quill! Convert the Court into a field of battle—make the Commissioner and the lawyers a battalion of infantry, and order Waugh to “charge them!”—and he would ride over from Spain on a mule, if he could get no other animal, and do his best to scatter them to the winds. Reckless says, to this day, that the reason that Waugh does not obey the orders of the Court is, that he does not understand them as he understood the orders of Colonel Cureton.

From the village of Porain, the British troops had a distant view of the enemy. He was in motion, and directly opposite our front, of which the village of Aliwal was the centre. The enemy's left appeared to occupy still its own ground in the entrenchment, while his right was brought forward and occupied the ridge. Sir Harry ordered the cavalry to “deploy into line and move on.” Nearing the enemy, the ground became very favourable for the manœuvring of troops. It was open, and hard grass land. Then came the order, “Cavalry to take ground to the right and left by brigades, displaying the heads of the infantry columns!” And then—

“Deploy into line!”

After deploying, Sir Harry discovered that the enemy's left far outflanked him. He therefore gave the order—“Break into open columns, and take ground to the right!”

When sufficient ground had been taken, the whole force wheeled into line. It was a beautiful bright and cool day—not a cloud to be seen in the heavens—not a breath of wind to stir the dust. The troops moved, when completing these manœuvres, with the rapidity and precision of soldiers on a parade ground. The glis-

tening of the bayonets of the infantry and the swords of the cavalry, as the line thus stood in the order of battle, was a very imposing sight. All was silent, when suddenly Sir Harry, who was at the head of the troops, gave the order, in a clear, steady, and vigorous voice, which was heard from one end of the line to the other—

“Advance!”

This was at about a quarter past ten in the morning.

Having advanced some hundred yards, the enemy opened his cannonade, which presently began to tell upon our troops. So hotly and briskly was this cannonade kept up, that Sir Harry, notwithstanding we were under fire, *halted the line*, changed his tactics, and determined upon concentrating the force upon the village of Aliwal, and taking it. The fighting now became very severe; but the object was accomplished. The village was *carried*, and two guns of immense calibre were in our possession. The battle now became general. How well all the troops behaved on that memorable day, is a matter of history; and how well the 16th Lancers behaved in particular, need not be dilated upon. They charged the squares formed by the battalions of the Sikh infantry—battalions formed and drilled by the late General Avitabile. They broke those squares, and cut the Sikhs to pieces. Almost every officer and man of the 16th who was not killed, received a wound. Reckless, who, as the hero of this story, claims our greatest attention, received two wounds—one in the breast (which would have killed him had not the point of the instrument pierced, in the first instance the little book which was in the pocket of his undress jacket); the other in his leg, a very bad wound, which was dangerous and painful for some time. Reckless did not say anything about his

own exploits ; but those who witnessed them declared that sabre of his took more lives than any other on the 28th of January.

"By Jove, Reckless, you are a regular Roostum!" said Colonel Cureton, when the business was over. "That right arm of yours was never easy for a moment."

"But I'll tell you what it is, Reckless," said Major (now Colonel) Smith—"when I am engaged with a man, I'll trouble you not to touch him."

"Did I touch him, Major?"

"Yes ; as you passed us, you sabred him in the neck ; and I would not have killed him, only that he deserved to be put out of his misery. I don't want your leavings, my dear boy."

"And another time, my dear Reckless, I'll thank you not to jostle me. On a race-course you may do it as often as you like, and pay the penalty ; but not on a field of battle," said Captain Pearson.

The day was gained ; fifty-two guns were captured, and eleven others were sunk in the river, by the enemy.

It was a well-planned and well-fought battle ; but our loss was very great, as might be expected. The Lancers lost in killed, two officers, fifty-six men, and seventy-seven horses ; wounded, six officers, seventy-seven men ; and seventy-three horses missing. The grand total of our losses on this day, of killed, wounded, and missing, was nearly six hundred !

The importance of this victory was something immense. Had we delayed much longer to strike a decisive blow, the country between Benares and the seat of war, the Sutlej, would have been overrun by hordes of armed thieves. As it was, robberies took

place every night in almost every station throughout the Upper Provinces—robberies with violence.

The distance between Aliwal and Ferozeshah is, in a direct line, about sixty miles; but by the road to it, seventy-four at the very least.

"Do you feel tired, Reckless?" asked Brigadier Cureton.

"Not in the least," was the reply. "I dare say I shall be very stiff to-morrow, but at present I could go at it again; and my horse is as fresh as possible. The excitement has not subsided in either of us as yet."

"That's it, Reckless," said the Brigadier, taking him aside—"that is it. Now go to Sir Harry, and ask him to allow you to take the news to the Governor-General's camp. Tell him I suggested it to you."

"My dear, dear Mr. Reckless," said Sir Harry, in his own impressive and impassioned way of speaking, "you are the very man, sir. By all means! Go to the head-quarters of the army, and tell the Chief that I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that this is the most memorable victory that ever was gained in India."

"I'll blow the trumpet pretty strong, Sir Harry, you may depend upon it," said Reckless, smiling. "You may safely leave it to me."

"Then get away with you," said Sir Harry. "Mind you tell them how I held the troops in hand!"

Away went Reckless. It is really wonderful the amount of fatigue that an Englishman upon a high-caste Arab horse can undergo in the East, and the distances that are sometimes performed upon horseback. Seventy-five miles would not have been any very great feat if man and beast had not been hard at work since daylight; but to begin such a journey when repose was

necessary, made it a very different matter. By judicious riding—and Reckless always rode with great judgment—he reached the Head-quarters' Camp at ten P.M., and made known the glad tidings to the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief. They had dined together, and were sitting over their wine and biscuits when Reckless, very pale with fatigue, and the pain which his wound occasioned him, walked into the tent.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed both Sir Hugh and Sir Edward simultaneously, and rising from their chairs. They were both becoming rather anxious about "Smith."

"We have thrashed the enemy soundly at Aliwal, and have taken all his guns!" said Reckless, sinking into a chair, and taking from Sir Edward's hand a bumper of sherry and water.

"Tell us all about it," said the Chief.

"Presently, sir," said Reckless, holding out his tumbler for more. (Poor fellow! He was consumed with thirst; he had neither eaten nor drank during the ride.)

"Do not exert yourself for a few minutes," said Sir Edward. "Be quiet; and when you speak, speak in a low tone. Why, you are bleeding, my boy."

"I am all right now, thank you, Sir Edward," said Reckless, reanimated by the refreshment he had taken. "None of my wounds are dangerous."

"Tell me—is our loss severe?" said the Chief.

"Oh, no! Not more than four or five hundred killed and wounded."

"Faith, that's a very pretty butcher's bill," said the Chief, "considering the force you had."

"How many pieces of ordnance have you taken?" inquired Sir Edward.

"About seventy," said Reckless.

"Seventy!" exclaimed the Chief. "Seventy guns! Are they big ones?"

"Some of them very big, sir?"

"Then, faith, that's not so bad. Ferret, five hundred killed and wounded; seventy guns—big guns. That's not a bad sum, by the Rule of Three, or simple division. Pat!"—(His Excellency addressed himself to the acting Adjutant-General, who was a connexion of his Excellency.)

"Yes, sir," said Pat.

"How many times will 500 go into 70?"

"None at all, sir," was the reply.

"Nonsense! You know what I mean. How many men for one gun?"

"Seven, and one over," said Pat.

"Ferret, *that's* not very expensive," said the Chief.

"If they are really big guns, it is dirt cheap. It is not half the price we paid for ours. Well done, Smith! a health to Smith! How *was* Smith when you left him, Reckless?"

"Very well; but very noisy," said Augustus.

"That's his nature," said the Chief. "But he has done well, and may be excused for being noisy about *something*. Is Cureton killed or wounded?"

"No, sir."

"That's well; we cannot afford to lose him. And who else?"

"Our loss in killed, as far as officers are concerned, is comparatively very small; but numbers are wounded—some severely, some slightly. The particulars of the battle are as follows: The——"

"You must not tell us the particulars," said Sir Edward. "We shall have them, no doubt, before the

morning, from some other source. You are much too exhausted to talk now. It is enough that you have given us the result. The enemy is routed, with the loss of all his guns—seventy in number,—and our loss does not exceed five hundred in killed and wounded. My dear boy, you must take some repose. Come; go with West and Hire. They will see you to bed, and have the doctor to look at your wounds.”

“Thank you, Sir Edward. But I wish to see my horse.”

“You need not give yourself any anxiety about him,” said an A.D.C. who had been outside of the tent. “He is quiet and comfortable enough. As soon as you got off him, he shook himself, and dropt down—dead!”

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE RANEE AND RECKLESS.

RECKLESS was taken to West's tent, and placed upon a couch. The staff surgeon came, and dressed his wounds. The lamp was extinguished, and he was enjoined to sleep. But this was impossible. The mind, as well as the body, had been overtaxed; and the more that Reckless courted Sleep, the further the drowsy god flew away from him. The eyes of every Seik soldier with whom he had fought during the day seemed to glare at him, and a ghastly grin seemed settled on each countenance. Having slain them in fair fight, he pitied them. It has been always thus with really brave men; even from the time of Alexander the Great, who, according to our great poet, wept for the fate of Darius. Towards

three o'clock in the morning Reckless became delirious. He sprang up, demanded a light, and armed himself with his sword, the girdle of which he buckled around his waist. His boots he then pulled on, and placed upon his head his undress uniform cap. Thus attired—and thus only—he was about to leave the tent, when West and Hire, who had been watching him, opposed his egress. At first he was extremely violent; but West contrived to calm, and then disarm him, whereupon Hire called in the assistance of several friends from an adjoining tent, and, having secured the sick man, made immediate arrangements for his being conveyed to Ferozepore, a few miles distant, where, so long as his temporary malady lasted, or until it had destroyed him, he would not be the subject of conversation, by disturbing those by whom he was surrounded; for, from the moment that his reason—diseased by over-exertion—failed him, he raved; and his ravings had reference to only one subject, and were, for the most part, confined to only one word—

“LEONORA!”

Whilst he was screaming out this word on the morning of the 29th of January, at daylight—Colonel, now Brigadier—Ornsbie happened to be passing the tent in which Reckless was then “under restraint.” The Colonel (who had heard that Reckless had brought the news into camp of the victory at Aliwal) instantly recognised the voice, and, entering the tent, asked if he could render any assistance.

The moment Reckless beheld Colonel Ornsbie, who kept his eye firmly fixed upon “the poor boy” (as the Colonel called him), he was quiet, and comparatively calm. At all events, he ceased to rave or exhibit

violence. Opiates had been administered, but they did not seem to take any effect. The Colonel had leave to proceed to Ferozepore, where he had a furnished bungalow close to the cantonment; and he undertook to convey Reckless there, and give him a room. A palanquin was at once procured, and Reckless induced to enter it; and by the time he reached the bungalow, some six miles distant from the camp, Nature asserted her sway, and he slept. Very gently was he set down beneath the verandah, and there suffered to sleep on, until nearly mid-day, when, having awoke, he was conducted to the room which had been set apart for his occupation. He was still very faint and ill, and quite unfit to mingle in any scenes of excitement; indeed, he was so weak, that he was obliged to lie down. Colonel Ornsbie did not stay long in Ferozepore; he bade adieu to Reckless—after enjoining him to remain as still as possible, and assuring him that he would be well taken care of—and rejoined his brigade.

The room in which Reckless lay was darkened, to exclude the glare of the sun. There was not sufficient light to read by, had the wounded man felt inclined to beguile his time in such manner. That wonderful medicine for the mind, sleep, had brought back his reason, and he lay recounting to himself the chief incidents in his life, from boyhood to the present hour; and he was dwelling on that greatest incident of all—his meeting with Leiora at the Downs—when the door of the room was opened gently, noiselessly, and the purdah lifted sufficiently to admit a figure (robed in a white loose dress), which glided, barefooted, to his bedside, and then bent over him. The face was so covered, that Reckless could only see the forehead, which was black. Presently he felt his hand taken,

and pressed tenderly by small and soft fingers—the fingers of a woman. Of that there could be no doubt—so magical is the touch of a woman's hand, especially in the hour of sickness.

Reckless at length essayed to speak. "Who visits me?" he inquired.

"An old woman," was the reply.

"The Rance?"

"Yes; be still. Presently your wounds must be dressed, and then you must take some food. Those are the Colonel's orders, and they must be obeyed."

"Where is Leonora?"

"She is not here. I am alone in the house; only a few of my faithful servants accompanied me to this place."

"Where is Leonora?"

"She is in Meerut, my child, with Shereenec."

"Why is she not with you?"

"It was a dangerous place, this, to come to, even for me. But you must not talk. You must get well; so that when a great battle will be fought soon, you will be able to take a part in it, and get great glory—more great glory—and then you shall see Leonora again."

Reckless sighed, closed his eyes, and fell into another sound sleep; and dreamt—dreamt of his home. When he awoke, at four o'clock, he found the Rance still by the side of the couch on which he was lying. She arose, opened one of the Venetians, and admitted sufficient light whereby to observe his countenance, which was very pale and haggard. He suffered her to minister to all his wants, to apply neem-leaves to his wounds, and felt as a child in her hands,—a grateful and obedient child. He was moved by her gentleness of manner, and the kind expression which was stamped

upon her face—which face, disfigured as it was by the small-pox, now appeared to him to be really possessed of charms.

The Ranee was not now covered with jewels. With the exception of her wedding-ring, and a silver ring, in which was set a red cornelian, covered with Persian characters, her person was devoid of ornaments. She had now the appearance of an ayah in the family of some wealthy European, rather than that of a member of a Royal house, which could point to the ruins of Agra and of Delhi as proofs of the vast power that it once possessed.

Night came. Reckless felt refreshed. He had slept sufficiently; and, in her judgment, the Ranee thought he should be aroused for awhile, rather than suffered to relapse into a state of lethargy and dreaminess; and she talked to him quietly, but incessantly, changing the theme with marvellous tact, and soothing his mind or exciting it, even as did the bard who sang to “Philip’s god-like son.” There were passages in her discourse which inspired him with a great respect for her character, so passionate and so poetical were her sentiments. She told him that she loved the Colonel for himself, but principally for the readiness with which he flung aside his pen, and the great and wild amusement of his life—the making of money—to buckle on his sword and take the field, and face the dangers that environed his position. She talked of Helen and of Paris (for the story of the *Iliad* had been translated to her verbally by the Colonel and by Leonora); and was very angry with Helen for not killing Paris when he came to her, after having ran away from Menelaus.

“Jo Deriden Sahib pola—such tha—bilcool.” (What

Dryden Sahib said was very true—"Only brave men deserve glorious women!") "I am told," she continued, "there was an English lady on the field of Ferozeshah; that she went there disguised as a man on horseback, and followed her husband's regiment into action, and up to the muzzles of the guns, which they charged."

"It is quite true," said Reckless; "I saw her and spoke to her."

* * * * *

On the following day, Reckless rallied immensely, under the Ranee's kind treatment. Several of his friends called to make inquiries, having ridden over from the camp on purpose, but none were permitted to see him.

He was not by any means tired of listening to the tales of Leonora's mother, who now began to give him patient lessons in Hindoostanee; and during the week that he was under her care, he made very considerable progress in that language. On the eighth day he was sufficiently recovered to go abroad and rejoin the army. And what was his joy on that morning to find himself in the company of Leonora! At considerable risk, she had journeyed to the seat of war to join her mother, a report having reached Meerut that the Colonel had been killed in action. Her younger sister, Shereenee, had also come to Ferozepore.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE BATTLE OF SOBRAON.

SIR HARRY SMITH'S force had now returned to the main body of the army, and the siege train had also arrived from Delhi. The largest British force ever assembled in India was now ready to strike an effectual blow. From every part of India (Bengal and the Upper Provinces) had troops been drawn. Staff-officers in civil employ were brought up to join the regiments. Thirty thousand Sikhs, the flower of the late Runjeet's army, were in position behind strong entrenchments, bristling with seventy-five pieces of cannon of large calibre. On the opposite side of the river the enemy had also an encampment; and a strong bridge of boats had been constructed to unite the two camps, and facilitate, if necessary, a retreat.

It was intended to open a cannonade at daybreak on the morning of the 10th; but such a heavy mist hung over the river and the plain, it became necessary to remain till the rays of the sun had dispelled it. This did not happen until half-past six; at least it was not until that hour that the whole of our artillery was brought to bear upon the enemy's position. Our guns were well placed and admirably worked; but after pounding away for a considerable time, it became very evident that our comparatively small guns would never silence the monster guns of the enemy, or even check their fire, which was marvellously accurate, and knocked over several of our batteries and disabled them.

Reckless was curious to see Colonel Ormsbie "under

fire," and being once more attached to the Chief's staff, he had an opportunity of so doing.

"Good morning, sir," said Reckless, riding up to the Colonel, who was very calmly contemplating a smashed gun.

"Good morning," replied the Colonel. "These pop-guns, or pocket-pistols, of ours may be very useful in covering ~~the~~ advance of the infantry; but you will see that they will not make much impression on those batteries of earth, planks, and fascines."

"The Chief will not wait much longer," said Reckless; "I observed he was getting very impatient just now, and said something about the 'cold stayle.'"

"Well, the sooner the better," said the Colonel.

These words had scarcely escaped his lips, when the order came for "Stacey's brigade to advance—supported on either flank by the Horse Artillery."

"Ah! that is something like," cried the Colonel.

On went the brigade—headed by as gallant a soldier as ever breathed. The bulwark of that brigade was the 10th Foot, which marched on in line as steadily as though it were on a parade-ground—their colonel halting them when necessary, in order that they might not be "blown." And while they were thus advancing, the Horse Artillery covered them, and galloped up to within three hundred yards of the Seik batteries, delivered its fire, limbered up, galloped to the rear of the brigade, reloaded, returned to the front, and kept on repeating this evolution till the 10th were fairly in the trenches. Immediately previous to going in, Colonel Franks, with great tact and coolness, ordered the men to "lie down and take breath." This done, they got up, scaled the entrenchments, bayoneted the Seik Artillerymen *with loaded muskets*, Colonel Franks having given

orders that not a shot was to be fired until he gave the word. Once inside, the regiment was drawn up rapidly, and discharged its fire. And such a fire! Perhaps the most murderous fire that ever was seen on any field of battle. Five hundred of the enemy, at the very least, fell dead when that volley was discharged. None of our oldest Generals had ever heard of such a thing as a regiment storming entrenchments with loaded muskets. "It is unparalleled in the annals of warfare!" exclaimed the Chief, when he heard of it. The attack of the brigade, consisting of the 53rd Foot and two regiments of Native Infantry, was also very daring and effective. But the business was not yet over. The battle, indeed, had scarcely begun. Our heavy artillery recommenced, and upwards of one hundred and fifty pieces of cannon were now thundering and reverberating through the whole valley of the Sutlej. There were as yet but the brigades inside the trenches; and upon these the Seiks were now concentrating their whole force.

"Where is that brigade with the 9th Foot?" said the Chief, angrily. "Captain Reckless, ride down and ask the Brigadier what he means—what he is about?"

Reckless, taking his cue from the Chief, rode down rather impetuously, and began thus to the "exquisite" soldier to whom he carried the message—

"What the devil are you doing here, sir?"

"Manœuvring my troops," replied the Brigadier, with such "*great coolness*" that it was alluded to in the despatches. "I am a reserve, you know."

"Reserve be —, sir!" shouted Reckless, in a passion, which rather faithfully represented the Chief's own feelings. "There are the batteries. The Chief says you are to charge them!"

"Forward, Ninth!" shouted Colonel Davies.

"Hooray!" responded the whole regiment, and pushed forward, as though it were thirsty for the fray.

And now the battle had become general, and was raging with frightful fury from right to left. It was worse even than Ferozeshah. Desperately, most desperately, did the Seiks fight, sword in hand, struggling to hold their batteries, and drive us out of their entrenchments; and so fierce was the conflict, that for awhile it was hard to say how it would end.

Is it possible? Is it a fact? It is! Sir Joseph Thackwell brings up the 3rd Dragoons, headed by Colonel White. How appropriate the motto of the regiment, "*Nec aspera terrent.*" They ride through the openings made by our infantry, scramble over the ditch, re-form inside the entrenchment, gallop over it, and cut down the artillerymen and the infantry at their guns. The day is ours. The Goorkhas, with John Fisher at their head, are at work with their deadly knives. The fire of the enemy slackens; and now it ceases. And now, pressed upon every side, they are in confusion, and rush to the bridge, and to the river, which they attempt to ford. And now the slaughter commences—the carnage. Our Horse Artillery are drawn up on the bank of the river, and pour salvo after salvo of grape and canister into the retreating Seiks. Hundreds fall at every discharge. The infantry, too, fire volley after volley into them. Thousands are drowned in attempting to gain the opposite bank. What a frightful scene! But they tangled some of our wounded men in the beginning of the action, and we have no mercy on them.

It is just eleven o'clock. The firing has ceased.

The battle is over. The enemy no longer is in sight. Seventy pieces of cannon, ten standards, munitions of war, tents, and baggage, are in the hands of the British, at a cost of killed and wounded—say, two thousand five hundred men.

The Prussian Prince and his suite were also witnesses of this battle—not distant spectators, but in the thick of it. His Royal Highness remarked to West (for whom he had conceived a great liking), with reference to, and in admiration of, the services of the 3rd Dragoons—"Attacks upon field-works are supposed to be the work exclusively of artillery and infantry." To which West smilingly replied, "Yes, your Royal Highness; but we are not a military nation." Every officer, almost, appeared to be wounded. How the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor-General were untouched is one of those inexplicable matters which do happen sometimes. Wherever the fire was thickest, there were they to be seen in the performance of their respective duties. Colonel Ornsbie received a very bad wound; a musket-ball struck him on the right cheek, and passed through the left, shattering and splintering his jaw. Reckless, too, was again touched; a spent bullet struck his shin bone, and lamed him so badly that he could scarcely walk. Honourable mention was made of him both by the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief. But, poor boy, he got into temporary trouble by distinctly refusing to retract some expressions which he made use of openly on the field, and which brought into question the personal courage of an officer of superior rank.

There were two of the Havelocks on the field,—Henry and Charles. Had the attack been delayed for another month, there would have been a third. The

elder brother, William, was on his way from Bombay with the 14th Dragoons, and heard of the victory of Sobraon when at Gwalior.

CHAPTER XLVI.

POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS.

BADLY wounded as was Colonel Ornsbie, he would not relinquish his command; nor did Reckless go upon the sick list, though he was now looking far more like a ghost than a man.

Three days after the battle of Sobraon, the British forces crossed the Sutlej, and encamped at Kussoor, an ancient stronghold of the Punjab, where a meeting was held between the Governor-General and the Scik chieftain, Goolab Singh, who came to beg pardon on behalf of the Court of Lahore. On the 18th, the Maharajah, who was then a very pretty little boy of about ten or eleven years of age, came to the camp, which was now at a place called Lulleala, and within three marches of Lahore. There was no salute fired for him, and but few of the customary compliments paid to a person of his exalted rank.

"Tell him—let it be explained to him that I cannot recognise him as a friendly Prince till he has distinctly tendered his submission," said the Governor-General.

The little boy looked as though he did not comprehend anything connected with the affair, and kept on asking Rajah Goolab Singh what they were talking about—what it all meant; and seemingly very ill at ease, he several times signified that he had had enough

of it, and desired to depart. Goolab Singh, however, tendered the submission on the Maharajah's part, and very eloquently he did it; whereupon the Governor-General caused it to be explained to the little King that it was now "all right"—that he was now restored to the favour and friendship of the British Government, and upon the following easy terms:—the surrender of the entire territory, hill and plain, between the river Sutlej and the river Beas, and the payment of a million and a half sterling in money, and giving up every gun that had been pointed at us during the campaign.

The Governor-General then talked to the little boy about the fame and character of Runjeet Singh, Major (the late Sir Henry) Lawrence acting as interpreter. The young Maharajah did not seem to care one jot about the fame and character of Runjeet. By the way, the latter—the character—did not deserve much favourable appreciation. The Governor-General also expressed a hope that the boy king would follow in the footsteps of his father; and the expression of this hope rather startled the Seik chiefs—for, notwithstanding Runjeet Singh was a very wonderful man, still it must be admitted that, from his earliest youth, he had been a robber of all those who were weaker than himself, and one of the most wicked and licentious of Eastern tyrants that ever lived. On taking his departure, now that it was "all right," a tremendous salute was fired from our twenty-four-pounders. But just after it was over, Goolab Singh wished to know whether he should take the boy back to his mother in Lahore, or whether the Governor-General would like to keep him.

"You may do what you like with him," said the wily Goolab Singh.

It was eventually arranged—and evidently to the

disgust of the boy—that he should be accompanied to his capital by the camp of the Governor-General. Then came the entry of our troops into the Lahore capital, every gun upon the ramparts firing a salute of seven rounds. This firing occupied more than three-quarters of an hour.

And now it was discovered that the Lahore treasury had not the means of paying a million and a half. It had only half a million; whereupon Goolab Singh said, "I've got a million in cash; and if you will give me the whole of the hill country between the Beas and the Indus, including the valley of Cashmere, you shall have the money." The Governor-General, advised by Sir Frederick Muligatawny, said "Very well;" and so the arrangement was concluded.

The Governor-General also consented to allow a regiment of H.M.'s Foot, eight regiments of Native Infantry, and a large force of Horse Artillery, and some Irregular Cavalry, to remain at Lahore till the country was perfectly tranquillized; and the rest of the large force that had fought so valiantly was then gazetted to march to various stations, according to the "relief." The regiment to which Reckless belonged was in orders for England; but Reckless obtained leave to remain, and accompanied the Governor-General's camp to Simlah, whither Colonel Ormsbie also went, and where he had a large house on the top of a very high mountain. With the scenery of the Himalayas, Reckless was, of course, enchanted. Who could fail to be? And so cool, clear, and bracing was the atmosphere after the heat and dust of the plains and the battle-fields.

It was here that Reckless's breast was again torn by those conflicting passions, love and prejudice—his

love for Leonora, and his prejudice against the entire Asiatic race. He had, from the first, hated, despised, loathed, abhorred the native character; and the more he saw of it, the more was his antipathy increased, or rather confirmed.

Kind as the Ranee had been to him, still he could not blot from his mind the fact that she was a native woman—one of the race against which his soul revolted, perhaps hastily and ungenerously; and then came the horrible idea that, if he married Leonora, his issue would most probably bear the brand upon them, and stand forth as living monuments in memory of their mother's origin.

When he was alone with Leonora, seated on a rock beneath a huge rhododendron tree, gazing on her beauty and listening to her gentle and musical voice, he forgot those ties of relationship which gave him so much pain; but then, when they were joined by Shereenee or by that hideous black boy, again that cold shudder would run through his every vein, while some mysterious spirit would whisper in his ear—"Ponder well!"

Revolving these things in his sensitive mind, Reckless held aloof from society, and took but little interest in the great topic of the day—the promotions and honours which the next mail would bring; who would get brevet rank, or a C.B., or both. In fact, when they did come, and Reckless was informed that a memorandum had been made to the Horse Guards to this effect, that "in consequence of the conspicuous gallantry of Lieutenant Reckless in all the actions on the Sutlej, that officer, on attaining the rank of captain, will immediately receive his brevet majority and the Companionship of the Bath," he quite chilled the old

Chief by the cool manner in which he received an intimation which would have caused the heart of many an officer of fifteen years' standing in the army to leap with joy. So indifferent did he seem, that the Chief could not help putting the question to him—"Surely you did not expect to be made a pare of the realm and a G.C.B.—did you?"

"No, my lord," replied Reckless, aroused. "And I am only too thankful to your lordship and the Governor-General for the handsome manner in which you noticed me in the despatches."

"If you had been a captain, you would have got your promotion and your decoration at once. But, as you are only a lieutenant, you must wait. It is very disagreeable, I know, to be kept waiting for anything in the world; but it cannot be helped."

"I am aware of that, my lord."

"As it is, I hear that there is a good deal of grumbling going on; and I am very sorry to hear it, for it is a very unsoldierlike thing to talk about not being honoured or decorated. Whatever a man thinks on such a subject, he should keep to himself."

Unfortunately, this was not the case. Many talked, at the billiard-room, at the racket-court, and on the public mall, of "the infamous shame of providing so handsomely for the personal staff of the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief." The loudest, however, in these complaints were those who had no species of claim to any sort of distinction of an honourable character.

"What the deuce did that fellow West do?" said an officer of a regiment of native-cavalry that ran away at Moodkee, chased by their own commander (as brave a man as ever lived), who cut several of them down, and

abused them for their cowardice. "Oh, you brutes!" he cried, *and left them to rejoin the 3rd Dragoons!*

"What did West do?" said Reckless. "He took an active and honourable part in three great battles; and wherever the danger and the difficulty was greatest, there was he, in the execution of his duty. And where the deuce were *you?*"

"Doing my duty."

"What! Out of the range of the enemy's guns, with a parcel of fugitives, of whom their own commandant states publicly, 'They ought to be shot!'"

Such altercations were, unhappily, too frequent, and led to many personal quarrels. The above, however, is the only one to which Reckless was a party. In future, he abstained from making any remarks whatever, when the question of promotions and honours was mooted.

It is very true that a few "Dowbs" were taken care of—not young "Dowbs," but elderly ones, who got the Bath and brevet rank for anything but *military* service. Nevertheless, no reasonable man could cavil at the good fortune which befell the officers on the personal staff of the Chief and Governor-General, during that campaign on the Sutlej. *

CHAPTER XLVII.

RECKLESS AND LEONORA.

THE war ended, Colonel Ornsbie renewed his former avocations. He dabbled in Bank shares, Government securities, insurance companies, steam companies, coal companies, &c. &c. His promotion and decoration of

"C.B." did not appear to elate him particularly, though he would have felt annoyed, perhaps, had his services not been recognised and rewarded.

The confidence which he reposed in Reckless, in suffering him to be constantly alone with Leonora, was the greatest imaginable. But then he was so certain of the integrity of the one, and the prudence of the other. He had always liked Reckless, but since the war he had grown to love him; and Reckless, after talking to the Colonel on the battle-field, had a far greater regard for him than previously. He had never for a moment doubted the bravery of Colonel Ornsbie; but he was not prepared to see such a man, and with such habits, so daring, so chivalrous, and yet so extremely cool and collected withal.

Colonel Ornsbie knew what was passing in the mind of Reckless. He knew that Reckless loved Leonora, and yet paused ere he should decide upon renewing his offer of making her his wife. And the Colonel himself now felt the force of those objections which his daughter had raised in England—or rather those conditions which she had imposed upon her suitor.

Some men would have said, "Here is my daughter. Nature has made her very beautiful and very clever. I can make her very rich. You may take her or leave her. Hundreds will be too glad to woo her and wed her, if you don't." But Colonel Ornsbie was not such a man. With all his eccentricities, he was a gentleman in the strictest sense of the word. He did not even allude to the subject when in conversation with his now constant guest; nor did he say one word that could possibly be construed into an attempt to induce the young officer to declare his sentiments. He had resolved that matters (to use a

hacknied phrase) should take their own course, and suffered the young people to conclude or dissolve their own engagement, without any interference on his part.

And if Colonel Ornsbie knew what was passing in the mind of Reckless, Reckless also knew what was passing in the mind of Colonel Ornsbie, and appreciated the consideration which dictated the Colonel's course of conduct. As for Leonora, she appeared to be perfectly satisfied with the delay in the judgment of her lover; and while she enjoyed his society, gave no sign of impatience as to the result. Nor did the Raneé, with whom Reckless had many interviews, now make the faintest allusion to the attachment which she knew existed between him and her daughter.

* * * * *

It was a beautiful moonlight night in the month of May, and Reckless and Leonora strolled out of the mansion, and took their seats on the rock upon which they had so often discoursed. The mountain on which the mansion was built was encircled by a road which was the favourite ride of the inhabitants of Simlah, and often would couples take their rides by moonlight. The tall fir-trees threw their shadows across the road; from every hill beneath them, in the distance, was to be seen, a light from the window of some house—a light that looked like a star in the distance. The hum of voices in the Bazaar had ceased, and all was now as still as the grave, when the sound of horses' hoofs was heard, and voices. One of the voices—that of the man—Reckless recognised as the voice of an officer, an A.D.C. on the Chief's staff. The other voice was that of a lady—a voice well known to him—the voice of no other than Mrs. North, the wife of the old Sudder Judge in Calcutta—the lady with whom he had flirted

to dissipate his vexation when he laboured under the idea that Leonora was a myth, and that he had been trifled with.

Mrs. North had arrived in Simlah on that morning, with her husband, who was now a very great man in India. She fully intended—though it was contrary to her custom—to resume Reckless as her attendant; but as he was not at hand, she accepted the offer of another hero—the first who proposed to escort her. Mrs. North was, in her way, a kind of DORIS. [*Vide Congreve's Poems.*]

The voices ascended; and almost every word was distinctly audible, as the couple on horseback now wound round the steep mountain at a very slow pace.

It was thus that they discoursed:—

The Lady. Oh, yes; she is very pretty, and a very good soul, and she sings nicely, and all that; but there is black blood in her veins.—Didn't you know that?

A.D.C. Indeed? I could not have believed it.

The Lady. It is a fact, I assure you. I knew her before she was married. That is to say, she was at the same school with me in England for some time. Her father spared no sort of expense with her education. Her brother, who is a lieutenant in one of the native infantry regiments, is almost as black as your boot.

A.D.C. You don't say so? What a lovely night, dear Mrs. North—is it not?

The Lady. Very. Why are you so sentimental?

A.D.C. How can I help being sentimental? The scene—the hour—the situation.—Let us ride as far as Mahasoa?

The Lady. Is it far?

A.D.C. Only a few miles.

The Lady. I am afraid.

A.D.C. Dear Mrs. North, I will guarantee your safety.

The Lady. Are you sure? (coquettishly.)

A.D.C. Yes (affectionately), dear Mrs. North.

The Lady. Have I not a Christian name?

A.D.C. Dare I use it?

The Lady. No! (And the road being now rather level, she permitted her steed to canter, and in another moment they were out of hearing.)

Reckless covered his face with his hands. Leonora, who was ignorant of the lady's name, fancied that he was grieving over another matter very different to that which agitated him. She was under the impression that he was moved for her sake—entirely for her sake; but could she have read his heart, she would have seen that he was, in a greater measure, afflicted at the idea that he had ever wasted the faintest scintilla of regard or affection on a woman so immeasurably inferior to the beautiful being who sat near him, depressed at the reflections to which the conversation she had overheard had given rise.

"How wise my father has been, dearest Augustus," said Leonora—"How wise to have screened me from the society of India! Had he introduced me, as he might have done, possibly I should have had the mortification to have heard, with reference to myself, what we have chanced to overhear with reference to some one else. 'She is handsome, or very pretty, and a good soul. *But she has black blood in her veins!*' I wonder who was she who said that? Her blood may be pure, but not her morals, I fancy, if her manners be any criterion."

"*Dear Leonora!*" exclaimed Reckless, "she is a worthless person. She is not half so good or so beau-

tiful as yourself. She is alluding to the wife of a civilian now in Simlah."

"Do you know her, Augustus?"

"I have seen her, dearest."

"She may not be so beautiful or so good as I am—not that I pride myself on my beauty or my worth—but still she has the privilege to say of me, and to me if we should ever cross each other's path—'You are half-caste!' Augustus, we can never be united!"

"Leonora?"

"I repeat what I have said. Let us part—here, and for ever. May God's every blessing attend thee, as well as my love and my prayers. Dear Augustus, kiss—and then——"

Reckless placed his arm around her waist, and sustained her. Whilst in the act of so doing, the boy broke upon them, and began to speak with Leonora in Mahratta. Reckless released his hold, and Leonora hastened to the house. The boy remained with Reckless for a few minutes, and then said in the Hindoostanee language, which Reckless now understood and spoke—"Sahib, that is your way home. I believe you walked here. But, if you are tired, I will send for a pony or a janpan."

Reckless gave him no answer, but made his way to the road, and walked to the cottage which he shared with West, who also had procured six months' leave of the hills as soon as the campaign was over.

On the following day, at the usual hour, Reckless again visited the house on the top of the mountain, and heard from the Colonel that Leonora was seriously ill, and confined to her apartment. The whole world seemed now desolate to the mind of Reckless, for he had a presentiment that he would never see Leonora again.

On the next day he called, and on the next; but with the same result. Leonora was reported to be still very unwell. Reckless expressed to the Colonel a desire to see the Ranee; but was told that that was impossible, as she was in constant attendance on her sick daughter, and never left her bedside. Observing the despair and the anguish which overspread the face of the young officer, the Colonel laid his hand tenderly and affectionately on his shoulder, and said to him—"Be advised by me. Go home. Go to England; you are ill, my dear boy. Your fatigues and your wounds have shattered your frame frightfully, and you are unfit for the excitement of a love affair, in which it is impossible—you will find it impossible——"

Here the Colonel paused—but presently he resumed—

"Go home, my dear boy. You are now in possession of all. Nothing has been concealed from you. As for ourselves—you and I—we have several times looked into each other's eyes when it rained shot and shell, and I hope we understand each other. As far as my daughter is concerned, I tell you frankly, she will never see you again in India."

"But, Colonel!——"

"My dear boy, listen to me! I have married a native lady of rank, and if I lived my life over again, I could do the same,—that is to say, I have no reason, in a selfish point of view, to regret the step that I took. Have you heard of our romantic history?"

"Yes, Colonel."

"Well, my dear boy, if my wife had been a being of a *mixed* race, I would not have married her."

"Colonel Ornsbie!"

"My own dear Reckless, you need not glare at me

in that fashion. We may quarrel, if you wish it, but we will never fight. The sound of shot—from the *ping* of a 24-pounder to the sharp *shush* of a musket-ball—has completely destroyed in me any charm for duelling. To me it would be like playing at billiards, with three peas for the balls, a black-lead drawing-pencil for a cue, and a faced card—the six of diamonds, for instance—as the table. So do not invite me, Mr. Reckless, to give you that sort of satisfaction.”

“Dear Colonel,” said Reckless, “I cannot comprehend you.”

“That is no fault of mine,” replied the Colonel. “I have simply told you, in all frankness, my feelings on a certain subject. Leonora was right; that you should see her in India was only just.”

“But do you imagine, Colonel Ornsbie, that I love her less, or that my intentions are in any way changed?”

“I know you love her—with a love that arises from intense admiration of her personal charms, and respect for her abilities and many good qualities. But that you wavered, until the moment when you last parted, she is perfectly certain—and so am I.”

“May I see her once more, and ask her to be mine at once?”

“That would be out of all question. In the first place, Leonora is now quite unequal to the least excitement. I, who have been her physician, as well as her instructor, since childhood, know perfectly well that any scene at this present time would endanger her reason, and impair it, perhaps, for ever. In the next place, if she were to consent to marry you at once—which just now she would not do—I should object in the most decided manner.”

"Why, Colonel?"

"I will tell you. There are some questions which a man may answer just as he pleases; but having answered them, he must take care that he does not betray and compromise himself. I was asked, laughingly, at a *table d'hôte* in Calcutta, whether or not I had a devilish handsome daughter. This question was put to me by an officer in my own regiment—the Regiment of Artillery. I replied to him—'My good sir, *you* ought to know;' and he accepted the remark as a denial on my part, and then informed me *that* it was to you he was indebted for the intelligence. If you marry Leonora, it shall be advertised—*announced*—that you have married a daughter of mine; and this might have been done *in India*, had *you* exercised ordinary prudence in the matter, and remained silent until all was arranged. As it is, I could not think of standing confessed a liar before the whole of the officers of my regiment, a great number of whom are under my immediate command. I do not mention these things to remind you of the error you committed, but simply to point out to you that if you should ever be united to Leonora, the ceremony must take place in some other country, and not in this."

"I am very sorry, Colonel," said Reckless, "for my folly—my unfeeling folly. But how could the place, or the country, affect your position, so far as your word is concerned?"

"It would do so; and, what is more, time would soften the contradiction between my statement in this country and the announced fact in another country."

"But, Colonel——"

"It is useless debating further on that point. Now let us revert to another. I am an old soldier, and

have seen a good deal of the world and of military life. Your regiment is going home; proceed with it to England; it will be hailed, as it deserves to be, with the acclamations of the British people. You, who have been so prominently noticed in all the despatches, will be singled out, sir, as the premier hero. You are still low down amongst the lieutenants; but when you get home, go to the Horse Guards, and ask for an exchange into a regiment of Foot. I would stake my existence, sir, your name being fresh in the minds of the authorities, and in the mind of the Duke in particular, that you would get your promotion *instantly*, and your brevet rank and decoration would follow. Remember what I told you in Lahore: that the present arrangement in the Punjab will never last—that the Seik army is not half destroyed—and that in a year or two hence there will be another campaign just as arduous and as bloody as the one we have lately witnessed. Moodkee, Ferozeshah, Aliwal, and Sobraon will have grown stale, and the heroes of the fresh battles will take precedence of the heroes of the old ones; and recollect that in such matters the last claims are the first that are satisfied. Go home—get your promotion—and then, if a second war breaks out, as it will, you will be eligible for further promotion and further distinction.”

“And resign all hope of Leonora?”

“Yes, for the present; or, at all events, let the hope remain in abeyance. You will see her again in England, perhaps—before many months have elapsed; for I, too, must return to Europe, to bring to book several large firms who have deceived and cheated me out of very large sums of money. And Leonora will accompany me. You will find us at the Downs; and I need

scarcely say how warmly you will be welcomed there, no matter how your engagement may terminate."

"Oh, God!" exclaimed Reckless, passionately, and hiding his face in the palms of his hands. "Colonel! let me see her once more!"

"Impossible! For her sake as well as for yours, I will not consent to the proposal!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HEROES AND THEIR PEDIGRESS.

RECKLESS, almost heart-broken, prepared to take his departure from Simlah. The only consolation that he had was, that he would not journey alone; for West had been advised to proceed to England, and have there extracted a bullet which had lodged between two of his ribs at Sobraon, and caused a wound which, though not particularly painful, might give him a great deal of trouble in after-life, the doctors said. West was in very high spirits at the idea of revisiting England, and presenting himself "covered with glory" to the lady of his heart, and then to his sister and his friend the General, who had been his guardian, and his first patron. He thought also of the pleasure with which he would meet Lady Mary and Sir Charles Reckless, and Chayworth; and while packing his trunks, singing, or rather humming a song, a thought stole over him that he would also pay a visit to the University, and show himself to those of his old friends who might still be there. Reckless, on the contrary, was wretched, and rather irritable. He was not going to his lady-love; he was going away

from her, and in all probability might never see her again. She might refuse to accompany her father; she might have taken offence at his conduct, and have concluded, and rightly, perhaps, that a love that could not conquer every prejudice was not worth having. Before leaving the hills, however, he received a long letter, from which the following sentences are extracts:—
 “My heart is thine for ever. Ere long we will meet again in England. * * * * *Do not visit the Downs until after our arrival in England.* * * * * I enjoin you, dearest Augustus, not to mention to any one—not even to the members of your own family—certain facts which, for the present, at all events, I desire should be kept secret. * * * * It is not caprice, dear Augustus, but love for you, which has induced me to think that it would be better for both of us if our engagement were at an end. I try to persuade myself that it is at an end—that we have mutually broken it off; but (alas!) my love is much stronger than my reason. * * * * You leave Simlah to-night, dearest, I am told. At the foot of the hill, near the entrance to Simlah, you will see a janpan,* and not far from it four or five horsemen (natives). Seated in the janpan, you will find one who wishes to say something to you. Stay, dear Augustus, when you see this little cavalcade, and gratify my desire. Approach the janpan, and speak to her. * * * * God bless thee!—LEONORA.”

“Speak to her,” said Reckless, aloud, to himself. “It must be Leonora whom I will find in the janpan. Speak to her?” he continued. “Aye, if every

* A large sedan chair, with an awning and curtains. It is carried by four hill men, called “Janpanees.”

word that I uttered subtracted a large portion of the existence which God has allotted to me in this world."

* * * * *

When Reckless observed the cavalcade, he commanded his men to halt. West's vehicle went on ahead. Reckless alighted, and was approaching the janpan, which was drawn up on the side of the road. One of the horsemen there assembled put the question to him—

"Captain Reckless, Sahib?" (Is that Captain Reckless?)

"Yes," was the reply.

"Good," said the horseman, riding away to a distance of fifty or sixty yards, followed by the other horsemen. Lifting up the curtains of the vehicle, and looking in, Reckless beheld—not Leonora, but her sister Shereenec. The little girl had craved to say Adieu to him, and the wish had been granted by the Rancee.

Much as he was disappointed, Reckless by his manners contrived to conceal the fact from Shereenec, and said very many kind and tender things to her, and thanked her over and over again for the attention she had shown him when he was so very ill at Ferozepore. And, at parting, he kissed her hand and her forehead, and received from her a bangle, or armlet, which she took from her wrist, and bade him keep for her sake, and in token of their friendship. The armlet was of gold, and in it was set a stone which Shereenec said possessed a charm—the charm of lulling to sleep those who were afflicted for the want of it. "It was placed beneath your pillow," she said, "when you were in need of rest, and it always had the effect." Little as Reckless believed in this gross superstition, he affected to

believe in it, and assured the donor that he would never part with it.

"You must give me, in return," said Shereenee, the first small stone that you may see in the road, and a small bough from the nearest tree."

Without questioning her, Reckless complied with her request; for he was now well acquainted with the manners and customs of the people of the East, and knew that, under such circumstances, to demand a reason would be as gross a breach of good-breeding and politeness as to hesitate about accepting a gift, no matter how valuable.

Whilst he gazed on the profile of Shereenee in the moonlight, Reckless was astounded at the wonderful resemblance which her features bore to those of Leonora. And, strange as it may seem, the fact did not occasion him any pain. There could be no question that they were sisters (more than once Reckless had been sceptical on this point), and that both were the daughters of the Colonel. Both of them had his brow and his chin, and the expression of his eyes and of his mouth, —not when the Colonel was making his calculations in respect to money matters, but as when Reckless contemplated the old man on the field at Sobraon, where he was, in word, thought, deed, bearing, and mien, a soldier in soul and essence. Sitting as Shereenee did—mute and motionless—at the moment when Reckless presented her with the gifts she demanded, the only difference between herself and her sister consisted, seemingly, in this, that the one was White and the other Black.

* * * * *

At daylight in the morning, Reckless and West arrived at Kulku, at the foot of the hills, and were

taken to a small but comfortable hotel there established, and called "THE BRAHMINÉE BULL," in honour of Colonel Edwardes, who, when a lieutenant, wrote a series of able letters in the *Delhi Gazette*, under that signature.

"The Overland mail, gentlemen, just in," said the landlord. West took the paper from his hands, and began to read aloud its contents, for the benefit of Reckless as well as of himself.

"Bless me! Here we are!" exclaimed the little officer, blushing.

"Where?"

"In this paper. They have given us a paragraph a piece."

"What do they say?"

"Why, after quoting what the despatches have contained, they go on to state who we are, where we were educated, who were our fathers and mothers, and all the rest of it; but, thank Heaven, they have said nothing about 'very ancient family.'"

"What do you mean, West?"

"Have you not observed, Reckless, that whenever a British hero—real or sham—turns up, the British public have a morbid desire to have him as descended from a very ancient family? If even they can make out that his ancestors were foreigners—Norman, or Danish, or Saxon—so much the better. Just as if from the people our heroes could not by any possibility spring—though poets and philosophers can. Of these they are content to say, 'He was born of poor but respectable parents in the village of So-and-so, and originally intended to follow the trade of his father, which was that of a shoemaker.'"

"It is not the fault of the public, West; it is the

fault of the newspapers. Preaching as they do so continually against the privileges of the aristocracy, they are the very first—when a man distinguishes himself by sea or on the land, in warfare—to hunt up his dead kindred, in the hope of finding that he is related to some lord or baronet, or the scion of some ‘very ancient family,’ as you express it. And, by Jove, sir, if, after raking amongst the ashes of the dead, and poring over the tombstones which cover their graves, they cannot find a pedigree that satisfies them, one fellow *makes* one, and the others adopt it.”

“Very true, Reckless. And here is an instance. This distinguished old officer, who behaved so nobly in all the fields, is the son of a tailor in Huntingdon. Who was his grandfather he possibly does not know. How he came to get a commission was this:—A General officer of distinction (to use his own words, for he gave me and several others his history one night, at Simlah, when he was warm with Burgundy, which sometimes brings out the truth against a man’s will) took a great fancy to him, and he entered the army at the age of fifteen. Now, listen to what this paper says of him—*‘He is descended from a very ancient family in Shropshire. His great ancestor came over to this country with William the Conqueror, who appointed him to an important office—that of Governor of Dover Castle.’* Now, the whole of that is an effort of some penny-a-liner’s imagination. But here is a worse case. They have claimed the gallant old Sir Thomas as a man of aristocratic origin. They have found out that ‘his mother was the daughter of an earl, and that his father was descended from the great House of *The Flybecks*, in Wales!’ According to Sir Thomas’s own account of himself, and of which he is not ashamed, his father was a brewer in

Dublin, and he was himself intended for the same business; but on the breaking out of the Peninsular war, he imbibed a thirst for military glory, and as he could not get a commission, he enlisted as a private soldier in a Dragoon regiment, speedily 'rose from the ranks,' and at the battle of Waterloo commanded a troop. He owes nothing in the world to interest, except that interest which his own merit acquired for him."

"It is sickening, certainly," said Reckless. "Robbing the people of their just due, and of what ought to be their pride, and giving it to the aristocracy and the large landed proprietors. It is a shame, West—an infamous shame."

"And it is a fraud, in another respect. Supposing that both, or either, of these misrepresented officers were to write and contradict those statements. Long before their letters could get home they may be put into the Baronetage, and once there, will remain there; for the compilers of these books are not prone to suffer those who have a place in them to smell of the people. There is a German proverb which says, 'When God grants office to a man, he grants the requisite amount of brains to fill it.'* And so it would seem that when Fortune grants to a soldier a great name, it grants also the proper amount of family connexion to adorn it."

"Yes," said Reckless. "It is not enough to grant him a title and a pension, but you must grant him, also a good family. If he had an uncle who was a doctor, or divine, or barrister, put him into the pedigree, with the word 'eminent' prefixed; but if he had

another uncle who was an apothecary, or parish clerk, or attorney, keep him out. And don't say a word about a tradesman. Draw the line, and draw it high."

"Holloa, Reckless," cried West. "Here you are again!"

"Nonsense!"

"A fact, sir. Three-quarters of a column, headed—
'CAPTAIN RECKLESS, A.D.C.'"

Yes, Reckless, here's your pedigree, with all the collateral branches of your family—collected, no doubt, from the Peppages and Baronetages."

"Let me look at it," said Reckless, hastily; and with an anxious expression of face, he was running his eye down the lengthy paragraph, when suddenly he stopped, threw the paper on the floor, stamped upon it, and then raved with passion. "By Heaven!" he exclaimed, "if I had that fellow here, I would have him tied to yonder tree, and order a black fellow—a sweeper—to flog him within an inch of his life. This notice of me will cause the whole of my family—my father, mother, and brothers—the greatest pain. This brute has deemed it necessary, when discoursing on my lineage, to exlume and revive a scandal that has been buried for the last thirty-five years. My belief is, that this notice will be the death of my father."

"Do not be so excited, my dear Reckless," said West.

"Excited! He has made my services a pretext for reminding the public of a horrible tragedy in our family. An aunt of mine ran away with a cousin of hers—a Captain in the Coldstream Guards. Unfortunately, he was a married man, and had two children. The brother of the offender's wife sought him out, and challenged him. The offender fell; and my aunt, a girl of nine-

teen, committed suicide, by stabbing herself to the heart. By this time—aye, long ago—the story was well forgotten; or, at all events, lingered in the minds of only a few. The present generation have now the benefit of it; and in accordance with the spirit of the age, it will form the subject of a controversy in most of the leading prints. Some man—some old foggy at his Club—will write to say that the lady in question was only a half-sister of Sir Charles Reckless. Another old foggy will contradict him. A third will say that Captain —— was not a cousin or any relation of Miss Reckless. A fourth will refer him to Debrett's 'Baronetage,' page so-and-so, such-and-such edition. A fifth will write to say that there was every reason to suppose that the officer in question did not fall in a fair fight, but was assassinated. This will provoke an indignant denial from the relations of the man who killed his antagonist. The conductors of some of the newspapers will not think or care one straw what tortures the Reckless family are enduring while this correspondence is going on, and greedily devoured by their readers, until they get tired of the subject. This is the penalty that my family has to pay for my being honourably mentioned in the despatches."

"Very true; but calm yourself, dear Reckless. It is very provoking, but it cannot be helped now. And see here!" said West, looking at the paper. "You are not the only one who has reason to be angry. Happily, poor Plantagenet is beyond the reach of earthly annoyance."

"What have they said of *him*?"

"They have simply given the history of his nuptials, and have omitted, in ignorance of the facts, all those extenuating circumstances, of which we are in possession."

"Impossible!"

"It is here, I tell you. The intention was to do him honour; and we are told that we should always take the Will for the Deed. It often happens, certainly, that in such cases one is in the predicament of the Mogul whom the well-meaning bear so severely injured in a laudable but misguided attempt to rid him of the annoyance of the blue-bottle fly that disturbed his slumbers, by buzzing about his imperial ears. I am glad to see you smile again, dear Reckless," continued West, "because it satisfies me that your violent passion is all over. Now, listen to another little matter respecting poor *me*. I, also, have a second notice of myself. For the first time in my life I am informed that my mother was a young Spanish lady, whom my father carried away from a convent after the storming of St. Sebastian, and married subsequently!—that the ex-Commander-in-Chief gave me my commission in consequence of the gallant deeds of my late father!—that my grandfather was the Hon. Sir Greville Berkeley West, K.C.B. and K.H., who commanded a division in the American war!"

"Is that true?"

"Not one word of it. My grandfather—so the General has told me—was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, who, having lost a leg in an engagement, was obliged to retire on his half-pay and his wound pension. Who was *his* father I don't know; and, what is more, I don't care."

"Those are exactly my sentiments, dear West," said Reckless; "and I am glad to say they are the sentiments of all my people. Neither my father nor my mother attach the faintest importance to titles; they estimate a man or a woman just as they would wish to

be estimated themselves—namely, according to their own individual worth.”

“I am glad to hear you say so, Reckless. Here is the breakfast; let us partake of it. Remember what Sancho said when they wanted him to go into battle: ‘Yes, when I have breakfasted; for it is the stomach that supports the heart, and the heart the mind, which gives us courage.’”

CHAPTER XLIX.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

AFTER a journey of sixteen days, Reckless and West, who had obtained leave to proceed to England by the overland route, arrived in Calcutta, and took their passages on board the steamer *Precursor*, which vessel was to sail on the following day. They had “hit the time” admirably—for neither of them were disposed to wait long in “the City of Palaces.”

Great, indeed, was the amount of experience which both young officers had gained. It seemed but as “the other day” they were two mere boys going out to India. They were now returning as two men who had seen a great deal of the world, and mixed with its people. And with what different eyes did they now look at the various places at which they stayed, for a short time, on their way home—Madras, Ceylon, Aden, Suez, Alexandria, Malta, and Gibraltar—Reckless, especially, who had scarcely seen them at all, so much was his time occupied in ‘paying attention to Mrs. North.’ At Southampton they met with an ovation. The persons

assembled at the wharf to witness the disembarkation of the passengers cheered them loudly and long—somewhat to their annoyance, for both of them had a particular aversion to be thus singled out and made so much of.

“You must come home with me, West, to the Castle,” said Reckless.

“No,” replied West; “you had better go alone. Much as I should like to accept your kind offer, I will debar myself the pleasure until the first greetings which you will receive from your family are over. The day after to-morrow, perhaps, I may be permitted to pay my respects, and will not fail to do so.”

“Dear West,” said Reckless, “my people do not expect me—for I have not written to them to say I am coming; and you would confer upon me an everlasting obligation if you will break to them the fact that I am near at hand, and that I am completely recovered. My sudden and unexpected appearance might occasion my mother too great a shock. Let us take the rail to the nearest station, and thence you can take a chaise, and I will follow in an hour afterwards.”

To this proposal West very readily agreed.

* * * * *

At about half-past eight o'clock, West arrived at Reckless Castle. It was a beautiful autumnal evening, and the various members of the family were strolling about the grounds. The first whom he encountered was Sir Charles, who did not recognise him at first, so aged and so altered—so tanned and so careworn—did the little man look. When West had communicated his errand to Sir Charles, the latter hastened to prepare Lady Mary for the coming of Augustus, having previously led the young hero to the drawing-room, where he was soon joined by her whom he most

longed to see—his “dear Mary,” who had never been absent from his thoughts, even amidst the din and roar of battle. Both, for awhile, were unable to speak; but sighs—love’s best interpreters—told of the joy that swelled and fluttered each heart. So joyed, indeed, was Miss Reckless to see Edgar safe beside her, that she heard of her brother’s return—much as she loved him—with comparative indifference. Presently Lady Mary entered the drawing-room, and bestowed upon her son’s friend several tokens of motherly affection, and surveyed him with as much pride as though he had really belonged to her. Sir Charles and the boys and the girls, down to such as were old enough to remember him, also encircled their visitor, and expressed how glad they were to see him again.

“Hark! there is a carriage at the door,” said Sir Charles.

“Then I will retire,” said West. But before he had time to do so, Reckless was holding Lady Mary in his embrace.

Lady Mary was speechless with emotion. She looked up into the pale face of her tall son, and shed those sweet tears of affection which afford the heart so much relief. The little ones welcomed him in another fashion. They danced around him, clapped their hands, and shouted boisterously, “Hooray! Guss has come back! Hooray! hooray! hooray!”

* * * * *

“You must not tell us too much about the war to-night,” said Sir Charles, as they gathered round the tea-table. “You must rest yourselves.”

“My dear father,” said Augustus, “if you only knew how tired I am of hearing and reading about the war, you would not be under any apprehension on that head.

The word Moodkee, Ferozeshah, Aliwal, or Sobraon, is a signal for me to run away from the man who utters it. Ah, no; you'll not get much about the war out of me, I can tell you. The war was all very well in itself; but the talking about it when it was all over, the controversy to which it has given rise, and the disputes that the distribution of honours and rewards has occasioned, have fairly disgusted me."

"I can readily conceive that," said Lady Mary. "The servants are in the hall. Would it be too much for you to receive their congratulations?"

"Too much for me? On the contrary," said Reckless, "I shall be delighted to see them again."

In they flocked, male and female; and each received a hearty shake of the hand from "the Captain." All the papers had spoken of him throughout as *Captain Reckless*, and still continued to do so occasionally.

"What do you think of these portraits, dear Augustus?" said Miss Reckless, producing two lithographs.

"Well, they look rather like two snobs—decided snobs. This fellow, a big, swaggering snob. Who is it?"

"That is intended for 'Captain West.' The other—the smaller one—is intended for yourself. They are to be had at every print-shop and railway station, 'price one shilling each.'"

"Well, if that is not enough to drive a man mad, I do not know what is. Here am I, rather vain of my personal appearance; and here is a fellow who shows me to the world as a man with an African cast of countenance—thick lips, flat nose, and long eyes. As for West, he is made to resemble a Holywell-street Jew. Is there no law to punish a man who treats you thus, I wonder? Does a man, if he is mentioned in despatches, so far become public property that everybody or anybody may

do what they like with him? And this is my portrait! This is what the artist fancies I must be like! What do you say to this, West?"

"I don't say anything to it," was the quiet reply. "I am beginning to think seriously, that 'whatever is, is right;' and that I have been made like a Jew in this picture for some wise end or other."

"We have another likeness of you, Augustus," said his sister. "Here you are as the frontispiece of the 'Reckless Polka.'"

"The what?"

"The 'Reckless Polka.'"

"Oh, yes," said Sir Charles. "One of the great composers took occasion to turn an honest penny by your deeds."

"And what may I be supposed to be doing here, on horseback?" inquired Reckless.

"There you are supposed to be killing the four Seik horsemen, and saving the life of Sir Harry Smith when he was assailed by them. That is Sir Harry Smith galloping away in the distance."

"A nice compliment to Sir Harry, certainly," said Reckless. "But this is the first I ever heard of this encounter. Egad! it is the old story of the 'Three Morning Guns,' in the *Critic*. As Puff very truly says,—'Give some people a good thing, and they never know where to stop.' The 'Reckless Polka'—eh? Let's hear the music."

"It is by no means bad," said Miss Reckless, moving to the piano, and playing the air, which was, in truth, a very spirited composition.

It was late that night before the inmates of the Castle retired to rest.

CHAPTER L.

OLD FRIENDS.

A SURPRISE was in store for Captain West—(we must allow the heroes that rank, in anticipation of the good fortune that was in store for them). Lady Mary Reckless had written a letter and despatched it by a groom; and at noon, or a little after, a lady arrived at the Castle. It was West's sister, Geraldine. But she was no longer Miss West; she was now the wife of the Reverend John Chayworth, Rector of Sinbury; for the late rector (his uncle) had died of apoplexy, and John had succeeded him in the rich hereditary living.

Mrs. Chayworth was not accompanied by her husband. She said he had been compelled, poor man, to attend a summons from the Bishop of the diocese, having been charged by several of his parishioners with having preached a Puseyite sermon,—which was absurd, she remarked, for it was one of a large batch that John had bought at a book-stall in London, and that it had been preached by the author, a Canon of St. Paul's, in the Cathedral, in the year 1817, long before Puseyism was ever thought of.

"Does he always buy his sermons?" asked West.

"Well, yes," said Mrs. Chayworth. "The truth is, John is so modest he thinks anybody's sermons are better than those he could write. But he told me to say, as soon as the business was over with the Bishop, he would gallop across the country, and probably be here a little after two o'clock."

Fortune had been very kind to these orphans. Who could have dreamt, two years previously, that their

respective positions in life would be so changed? The one was then an assistant governess in a school; the other a sizer, living in a garret in Trinity College, Cambridge.

The particulars of Miss West's wedding were on their way to India. Geraldine had written to her brother; and Miss Reckless, who was one of the bridesmaids, had also written to him. Sundry pieces of wedding-cake, hermetically sealed, had also been despatched, "*via* Marseilles and Bombay," to the care of the Right Honourable the Governor-General of India. If the whole truth must be told, a friend of Chayworth's, in the Board of Control, put the packets into the bag which contained a number of heavy despatches from the Court of Directors, so that their safe and speedy delivery was pretty well ensured.

The private secretary, by the way, when he saw the tin boxes, fancied that they contained sardines, and ordered them to be opened *instantly*. He was not a little disappointed to find "cake" instead. However, all the staff tasted it, and thought it "very nice and a wonderful preservation, and no doubt the very best thing that the bag contained."

It was suggested that West and Reckless should be instantly written to, and requested to transmit a lobster or two, and a piece of Stilton cheese, by every mail, in the Court's wallet, as they facetiously styled the receptacle of those august despatches signed by the Chairman and Deputy-Chairman, "for self and the other Directors." A few months afterwards, how the Chairman and the Deputy-Chairman, and the rest of the Governors would have stared could they have beheld the great and interesting ceremony of cutting the string, breaking the seal, emptying out on the floor the bag's contents, and the search that

was then made for those lobsters and other delicacies "by express." It used to be a standing joke—"Well, if the mail does not bring us any news, there is one great comfort—it will bring us fish and cheese." And then some young A.D.C. would "wonder what Hogg and the other fellows would say if they could *see* the scramble?" To which another A.D.C. would respond—"Oh, they would make some pompous and ridiculous remark of this sort—'How sad to reflect that the interests of our vast empire in the East are thus trifled with!—and all for the sake of the early receipt of a lobster and a bit of cheese!'"

But we are digressing. Chayworth arrived in time for luncheon. The meeting between himself and his brother-in-law and Reckless was, as the reader will imagine, a very happy one.

"I watched your progress with very great interest, my friends," said Chayworth; "but I hope, from my heart, there will be no more victories or battles."

"Why not?" inquired Reckless.

"Because," said Chayworth, "I had to preach a sermon on the occasion, and it gave me no small difficulty. Indeed, I hardly know what I should have done, had I not got hold of one that my uncle preached just after the battle of Waterloo."

Observing that West was very happy at the Castle, Chayworth and his wife did not ask him to accompany them to their home. They contented themselves with inviting him to come whenever he pleased, and stay as long as he pleased.

It would have been a sad pity to have taken him away just then—he was so supremely *West* in the society of his lady-love, to whom he read, beneath the

shade of a large walnut-tree, the journal that he had kept from the day of his departure to that of his return. If she had required any *proof* of his fervent and unwavering love for her, it was to be found in those pages—for there was not one in which her name was not written.

Here are some of the entries:—

“18th Dec., 12½ P.M.—Going into action. Prayed for dear Mary. 19th 20th 21st.—Another action about to be fought. God bless thee, dear Mary. 22nd, 2 A.M.—Thought that night would be my last. Still thought of Mary.

“10th Feb.—Inspired with a fear that something would happen to Augustus. He was so needlessly venturesome. When looking in his face, and remonstrating, thought how wonderfully like his features were to those of dear Mary.

“Simlah, April 29.—Heard a lady sing a song beginning, ‘Here’s a health to thee, Mary.’ Learnt the words and the air, and always sing it when I am alone.”

The greater part of the contents of this Diary had already been communicated to Miss Reckless in letters; but even as a twice-told tale, it appeared to give her great satisfaction to read it with him. While they were so engaged, Reckless approached them. He was obliged to do so. The luggage had arrived, and West had all the keys. •

“Captain West has been reading to me his journal Guss,” said Miss Reckless.

“Has he?” was the reply.

“Yes. Didn’t you keep one?”

“Not I. I was not so weak as all that. Suppose West had been knocked over, all the tender things in that book would have been read, of course, by other

eyes, in order to ascertain if he had expressed any last wishes; and no small amusement, I suspect, they would have afforded to those into whose hands they might have fallen."

West and Miss Reckless both blushed.

"Oh, no," continued Reckless; "I keep no Diary of my whole course of love—beyond what I keep in my brain."

After Reckless had left them, Miss Reckless asked West if he had met Miss Ornsbie in India. He replied in the negative, of course; and then he went on to say that there was some mystery attached to her, and for months past Augustus had never mentioned her name to him, and, when interrogated, evaded the subject.

* * * * *

Having opened his leather trunks, Reckless displayed to Lady Mary the various relics of the campaign which he had brought home with him. There was the bullet that killed a brave officer of rank at Moodkec; a number of Bactrian (silver) coins, which were taken from the back hair of a Seik artilleryman, whom Reckless had cut down in the memorable charge of the 3rd Dragoons; there was a plain gold ring—a wedding-ring—which he found upon the little finger of a hand that had been blown from the arm by a round-shot, at Ferozeshah, on the first day. It was evidently the hand of an officer, it was so small and so soft. To whom the ring belonged he could never discover; possibly it belonged to one of the many officers of the 62nd, or 9th Foot, who fell that afternoon—poor Sims, or Scott, or Kelly, or Field, or some other; and it may have been put on as a talisman, immediately previous to going into action. Lieut. Craig, of the 62nd, who lost his hand just above the wrist, and on which hand

was a gold ring, came to Reckless's tent to look at it. But it was not his. "Mine was a signet-ring," he said. And there was a large silk handkerchief which General Dick made him a present of, to tie round his arm, a few minutes before the General received his death-wound. But what interested Lady Mary most were the clothes that her son had worn in the various engagements. All of them were stained with his blood, and that of the horses that had been shot under him.

Lady Reckless was a little surprised that Augustus had never alluded to Leonora; and concluding that he had his reasons for not doing so, she abstained from putting any questions to him on that subject. She was, nevertheless, not a little curious to know something concerning one in whom she had taken so intense an interest, apart from the circumstance that she had been betrothed to Augustus. That he was unsettled and unhappy in his mind, Lady Mary could see very plainly, and guessed that the cause was some *contre-temps* in his love affair, which he was not willing to communicate even to herself. Reckless, moreover, was absent in his manner, and somewhat incoherent in his discourse at times—so much so, it was very evident he was thinking of some other subject, and not that upon which he was conversing. And nothing seemed to give him delight—neither riding, nor fishing, nor any of those sports in which he formerly indulged with such avidity; nor would he play, or sing, or read. His sole occupation was moping and thinking, and walking about alone in the most secluded part of the grounds. It is true that he was suffering from one of his wounds, which tormented his body sadly—but there could be no question that it was in the mind that he felt the greater pain.

CHAPTER LI.

THE GREAT DUKE.

It was not until the fifth day after their return to England that the young heroes presented themselves at the Horse Guards, and were shown into a room in which was seated at a small oak table, covered with green baize, the greatest Captain of the age, who, on their entrance, rose and extended his hand to each of them.

"Be seated," said the Duke.

They obeyed him.

"I know all about you," the Duke began, rather abruptly. "I don't want to hear anything about the battles. I have heard enough—too much—already."

What a relief was this to Reckless! But not so to West, who was panting to explain how the 29th stemmed the torrent of that murderous fire.

"You have been a very short time in the service," continued the Duke, rubbing his hand across his brow. "Sir Edward Ferret did not tell me that you were such very young soldiers. Your promotion is easy enough. That can be done by gazetting you to a West India Regiment; but it is the brevet and the decoration that gives me some difficulty." o

"In that case, your Grace," said West, "I hope that the promise that was made will be considered null and void. It were better that we should be disappointed than that the justice of any act of your Grace should be called in question."

"You are a very generous little man," said the Duke.

"By the way, you are a son of the late Major West,

whose conspicuous gallantry I so often witnessed. And you are not only like your father in person and in features, but in thought and in good feeling. I care not what the papers may say. You shall have your brevet rank and your decoration, and that very shortly. And so shall you, sir" (turning to Reckless). "And now tell me, were either of you near Major Plantagenet when he died?"

"Both of us, your Grace, and several others," said West, "were kneeling by his bedside. He sank to his eternal rest with all that calm dignity which might have been expected of him. And his last words were his thanks to those who surrounded him in his last moments."

The scene was so vividly revived in the mind of Reckless, who loved Plantagenet to devotion, that the tears involuntarily started in his eyes, and he experienced a choking sensation. The Duke observed his emotion, and rapidly rising from his chair, he left the room, and was absent for several minutes. When he returned, it was plainly to be observed that he had shed tears—bitter tears—

Affection's fondest tribute to the dead.

The Duke's manners were no longer abrupt. They were as courtly and as gentle as those of Arthur Plantagenet himself; and it was impossible not to observe, in the main features of the face, the expression and colour of the eye, the shape of the nose, and the rather prominent chin, a very strong resemblance between the great Captain and the heroic Plantagenet, who sleeps the sleep of death at Ferozepore, not many miles from the spot where he fell, in the flower of his age and the spring-time of his glory..

The Duke placed his elbow on the oak table, rested his head on the palm of his hand, gazed vacantly at the inkstand, and exclaimed, abstractedly, "Poor Arthur Plantagenet!" Then, suddenly recollecting and arousing himself, the great warrior seized a pen and made a memorandum.

"We are trespassing on your Grace's time," said Reckless, rising; an exclamation which West immediately followed.

"Eh? What? Yes!" said the Duke. "But this that I am writing has reference to yourselves." And, again rising, his Grace saw them to the top of the staircase, shook hands with them, and said, "Good-day. *Major* Reckless; good-day, *Major* West. It will afford me great pleasure to present you to your Sovereign at the next levée. Good-day!"

* * * * *

"What! Reckless and West!" exclaimed a voice, as the two Majors were passing through the gate of the Horse Guards, on their way to Charing Cross. They turned round, and saw an officer in a bear-skin cap, and the uniform of the Guards. "I thought you were in India, my dear boys."

"Is it possible?" said Reckless, accepting the hand which was held out to him.

"Quite possible," was the reply. "About two months after you left England, I got into a little scrape at Cambridge, and obliged my family by taking a commission in one of the regiments of the Household Troops—the Guards, sirs—the Guards! And here I am, doing duty. I read all about you in the papers, and congratulated you both from the very bottom of my heart. But what are you doing here?"

(The officer who thus accosted his friends was the

Honourable Charles Fitzwilliam Bygram, contemporary and friend of the young heroes at the University, and one of Dacre's set.)

"We have been having a chat with the Duke," said Reckless; "and when leaving him, he called us Majors."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Bygram. "But never mind that; come to the Club, and take luncheon with me. Why not dine with me to-night?"

"I see no objection whatever," said Reckless.

"But I am afraid that I cannot accept your invitation, Bygram," said West.

"Why not?" asked Reckless.

"Because I promised Lady Mary Reckless that I would return this evening, and I must fulfil that promise," returned West, nervously twitching at his glove.

"And I dare say you promised some one else," said Reckless, smiling.

West made no reply to this remark, but became very red in the face. The slightest jocular allusion to his attachment always made him very angry and indignant.

"Well; but you can come to luncheon, if you cannot dine," reasoned Bygram.

"I am afraid not," said West. "I have sundry little commissions to execute, and one or two calls to make." And after shaking each of them by the hand, he left Bygram and Reckless on the pavement, and "went about his business." He had promised dear Mary that he would bring back with him a daguerreotype portrait of himself, and copies of the *Gazettes* containing the despatches in which his name had been mentioned. Sir Charles, also, not having much confidence in his son's memory for trifles, had asked West to do several little

things for him in town—such as ordering flower-seeds, and leaving a sample (a handful) of hops at a house in the Strand.

“He is spooning on my sister of mine,” said Reckless; “and, as I have told him, it is the greatest evidence of his pluck that I know of—for she is more than a head and shoulders taller than he is. She is nearly as tall as I am, sir.”

“Not *Miss* Reckless, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at a ball last month?”

“Yes, the same—my eldest sister.”

“And do you suppose it will come to anything?”

“Yes, it will be a match; I am sure of it.”

“Lucky dog!” sighed Bygram. “I cannot tell you how much I, in common with every one else, admired *Miss Reckless*. On the strength of being a friend of yours, I introduced myself, congratulated her on your good fortune in having escaped the dangers of the field, and all that sort of thing, and subsequently danced with her—twice.”

“Is it not a very odd thing,” said Reckless, “that a very short man should almost invariably or so often fall in love with a very tall woman, and a very tall woman with a very short man?”

“Wonderful!” replied Bygram; “it is one of the paradoxes of human nature.”

“I wish I had brought my servant and some clothes with me,” said Reckless; “I would have stayed a night or two in town.”

“My good Reckless,” said Bygram, “one of my rooms and my wardrobe are at your service; and as for a servant, my fellow shall attend to all your wants. I have apartments over a tailor’s shop in St. James’s-street—private entrance, of course.”

"Thanks. I accept your offer," said Reckless.

"My landlord is not my tailor; but he is nursing the hope that he will be, and therefore never sends me in a bill for the rent, which is rather convenient just at present."

"And how long do you suppose that he will suffer the hope to be a substitute for money?"

"Well, I don't know. Some men live a long time on hope," returned Bygram, "and grow fat on it. But here we are at the Club."

Reckless, on entering the Club, was greeted by several officers who had known him in India—several who had been obliged to return to Europe, even before the campaign was half over. To other officers he was introduced by Bygram, and was overwhelmed with congratulations, of which he was now becoming very weary.

After luncheon, Bygram was obliged to repair to the barracks in Birdcage Walk, where he had some duty to perform; and Reckless meanwhile took a cab, and visited all his brethren, who received him with unbounded affection. From each he heard that his conjecture touching the publication of his pedigree *had* occasioned the family very great pain and annoyance, and that they had kept out of society for some weeks, while the correspondence in the papers was going on. In all, there were eleven versions of "the tragedy," and as many as six or seven letters in support of each version. The manager of one of the inferior theatres, he was told by his eldest brother, snapped at this "Tragedy in High Life" (such was the heading in the papers to the various letters), and employed some scribe to dramatize the story; and he did it, giving the real names! "Jack and I," said Mr. Reckless, "went across the water, on purpose to see this tragedy; and

so far from adding to our annoyance, it almost dispelled it, so ridiculous were the situations and the dialogue. Just fancy the author—who, no doubt, composed the play in the tap-room of the public-house he frequented—putting into the mouth of a lady, immediately previous to the use of a dagger, such a sentence as this:—

“ ‘The time is up! Now for it!’ ”

“You don’t mean to say so?” said Reckless.

“I do, Augustus,” said his eldest brother. “And then the ingenious way in which the wretched scribbler introduced *you* into the play.”

“Introduced *me*?”

“Yes. He makes the heroine predict that a scion of the house of Reckless—— But let me give it to you in his own words; and remember, that your unfortunate aunt (Miss Geraldine Mandeville) is dressed in a dingy white satin gown, trimmed with pink flowers, and wears a wreath of roses in her hair:—

“ ‘A Reckless member of the Reckless House
Of Reckless, shall adorn, as will be seen,
The page of History! Daggers shall not,
Nor swords, affright the youth, who shall
My name perpetuate! No! By the Gods!’ ”

“But they did not put me on the boards?” said Reckless, laughing.

“Not in the flesh, Guss,” replied his brother. “Your aunt, after speaking the speech I have above quoted, threw herself on a couch, and fell fast asleep, to the sound of slow music. While sleeping, she talks, half incoherently and half didactically; and, while she is talking, there are four dissolving views exhibited to the audience—Moodkee, Ferozeshah, Aliwal, and Sobraon. Your

name and family having suggested the play, you are made—out of compliment, I suppose, and to verify the prophecy of your aunt—the principal figure in these views. The chiefs and the generals are mere supernumeraries. The effect was far from bad, I assure you; and it was no matter of astonishment to me to find that it ran ninety nights ‘without a break.’ They are doing it now in the province, I believe, and I dare say with all its metropolitan success. You ought to go to Liverpool, and see it.”

“And such is Fame!” said Reckless.

CHAPTER LII.

A VERY IMPORTANT ONE.

HAVING executed the commissions with which he had been entrusted with dispatch and accuracy, Major West took the coach for the Castle, and arrived there in time for dinner. On the retirement of the ladies on that evening, West, for the first time, found himself alone with Sir Charles Reckless, and he thought it would be an excellent opportunity—“over the wine and dessert”—to make known to the baronet the great object of his wishes—namely, to be received at the Castle as the acknowledged suitor of Miss Reckless’s hand. And, after giving Sir Charles the whole of the particulars of the interview with the Great Duke, he came to the point—rather confusedly, it is true—and put the question as briefly as possible.

“Major West,” said Sir Charles, “I speak on behalf of my wife as well as of myself, when I tell you that it

would afford us the greatest pleasure to see our daughter united to one so worthy of her as you are. And so long as you may please to remain here, as one of the family, the rooms of which you are at present in possession will be yours entirely. But, surely, you have no idea of marrying just yet?"

"My pay, Sir Charles, as a Captain, will be £255 in this country, and double that sum if I serve in India," said West.

"Then, you do not expect anything whatever from me as a portion for my daughter?"

"No, Sir Charles."

"Well, I agree with the Duke—you are a very generous person to all save yourself. But I do not agree with you as to the sufficiency of the income on which you propose to live. No, Major West. I can afford to give my daughter a sum of money sufficient, if properly invested, to yield an annual £250; and with great economy you may possibly live in comfort on that, when added to a Captain's pay. It is not, however, a matter of competency, but a matter of time. Think you that you are old enough to take a wife?"

"Yes, Sir Charles, and steady enough."

"There is this to be said certainly, Major West, that you are far older than your years would indicate; that is to say, your mind seems quite matured."

"I thank you, Sir Charles, for that opinion."

"Well, so far as I am concerned, the happiness and welfare of my girl is the chief consideration; and as she is quite old enough to decide for herself, she must do so. You spoke of your pay being double in India. Have you any idea of returning to that country?"

"If another war should break out, Sir Charles; and in that case my——" (West hesitated.)

"Yes—say the word—your wife," said Sir Charles.

"My wife would accompany me."

"Oh! you have arranged all that?"

"Yes, Sir Charles."

"Ah! well; this conversation of ours is nothing but a matter of form, after all. Well, be it so—be it so. Take some more claret, and give me the bottle. You must settle all with the ladies. To them I refer you without hesitation."

* * * * *

On the following morning, after breakfast, Major West walked with Lady Mary in the flower-garden, and "broke" to her the subject, for which she had been prepared by her husband. Lady Mary had seen West's Diary (Miss Reckless had shown it to her mother in confidence), and the entries therein had satisfied her that West was not, by any means, too young to marry. And this, with that frankness which was so prominent a feature in her character, Lady Mary made known to the little officer, whose happiness was now complete. Yes; he had the consent of Sir Charles and Lady Mary to marry their daughter, so soon after he was gazetted as they might arrange between themselves. It was very true what West had urged; they had been engaged for a whole year, and had corresponded regularly during that period.

At noon that day, West and his affianced bride were on their way, on horseback, to the Rectory of Sinbury, on a visit to the Chayworths. The distance across the country was not more than eleven miles.

Chayworth could not help laughing when he heard from his brother-in-law a request that, when the time came, he would marry him to Miss Reckless; and suggested, laughingly, that West should have a stool

brought into church, and stand upon it during the ceremony. This pleasantry West did not exactly appreciate ; but he was not angry with Chayworth.

"Oh, yes ; I'll marry you," said the Rector ; "and as you are a connexion, only charge you half-price."

* * * * *

Let us follow Reckless. Where was *he* while West and his sister were at the Rectory ? He was in custody at a police-office, and in a rather awkward predicament. After dining with Bygram, they went together to a théâtre, and after the performance was over, Bygram, instead of conducting his friend to his apartments, took him to a house in King-street, St. James's, where, after ascending several flights of steps, he found himself in a room half-filled with gentlemen, who were playing at hazard.

"Have a venture, Reckless," said Bygram. "Have you got any money ? If not, here's some for you."

"Thank you ; I have some notes in my purse," said Augustus. "But suppose we join our capital, and you do the executive—I remaining as a sleeping partner. Here is a fifty, a twenty, three tens, one five, and some sovereigns—altogether just £100."

"Very well," said Bygram.

Up to half-past two o'clock all went on very quietly and pleasantly for the firm of Bygram and Reckless, inasmuch as their winnings amounted to about £800.

"You have brought me all this luck, Reckless," said Bygram. "I have been a steady loser for the last three weeks, sir—£1100 to the bad. There we go again—take it up !"

"Hark !" exclaimed several voices at once ; and then a little bell rang, and then there was an awful com-

motion in the room, while the noise below became greater every moment.

"Open the door!" was called out below, in the passage.

"Stop a bit," was the reply, "till I can find the key!"

"Bang! bang! bang!" and down came *that* door.

"What's the matter?" said Reckless, who felt very much in the position of the country rat in the old fable.

"Only those beastly police," said Bygram, quietly. "By the way, if they ask your name, say Weaver.—John Weaver; and if they demand your address, say 'Long's Hotel.'"

"Bang! bang! bang!" and down came the portal on the *second* staircase.

"They have carried that battery," said Reckless, in a tone of voice which amused the company and provoked a loud laugh. "But are we to remain passive? Don't we form square, or do anything?"

"Nothing, my dear sir," said an officer of the Blues, twirling his moustache. "We shall form a square in the dock to-morrow morning, but we shall not be able to resist the charge—the charge of being found here."

"Tap! tap! tap!"

The door was opened, and in walked Mr. Beresford, an Inspector of the Police, in plain clothes, followed by several other officers similarly attired. A search was made, and an old piece of cloth found. It had not been used that night, but it was considered sufficient to warrant the apprehension of the whole party, and to justify the police in removing them to the nearest station-house, where every gentleman was asked his name, and *searched*. (This indignity, of course, is *only* a matter of form. The station-house, like death and

love, levels all ranks, and lays the burglar's jemmy by the side of the Guardsman's cambric pocket-handkerchief. Lord Campbell and other judges have commented on the impropriety of this proceeding; but the laws of the station-house, like the laws of the land, must be observed.)

Reckless had given the name of Weaver; Bygram had given his old name—that of Smith. But when searched, a pocket-book was found upon Reckless containing several cards, upon which had been engraved in Calcutta, "Captain Reckless, A.D.C."

From another of the party—a Mr. Anclius Jones—had been taken a lawn pocket-handkerchief, which had a coronet worked in one corner, and the letter V beneath it. All the rest of the party, at the hearing of the case, had been dismissed, with the exception of these two—"Weaver" and "Jones"—who were "remanded" until certain inquiries could be made. Consequently, they remained in custody until half-past six o'clock, when Mr. Beresford, with a smile, let them out of the cage, and gave them their liberty.

Instead of being consoled with by Bygram, that officer simply held forth to Reckless on the absurdity of carrying cards about with him after dark, and seemed entirely to forget that that was the first time Reckless had ever visited a gambling-house, and was not aware that it was a house of that description until he was inside it, and invited to play. The adventure, however, conjoined, perhaps, with the pleasure of winning (for victory's sake), recompensed Reckless in a great measure, and he listened in excellent part to the remonstrance of his more experienced friend, Captain Bygram. He had now an appetite for play, and while he indulged in it, forgot much of what had hitherto

preyed upon his spirits ; and, much to the uneasiness of Sir Charles and Lady Mary, he stayed away from the Castle, and led a town life—a life of dissipation and of indolence. Now and then, when weary of this kind of existence, he would run down into the country and breathe the pure fresh air ; but speedily he would return to it, the moment his languid frame was restored to its wonted strength. West on several occasions took the liberty of remonstrating with him, but to no purpose. For some time—that is to say, for more than two months—his good fortune at cards was in the ascendant ; but, after that, it deserted him, and he not only lost back his winnings, upon which he had been living rather extravagantly, but had several heavy scores against him—scores which it would puzzle his ingenuity to meet, unless he demanded assistance from his father and his brothers, or threw himself on the tender mercy of the Jews ; and to resort to either of these measures he had a very strong dislike.

While brooding over the most pressing of one of his difficulties, he one day met in Cockspur-street “the Prince Zemindar, Baboo,” who had just returned from a long tour on the Continent. The Baboo, who shook him very warmly by the hand, scarcely recognised Reckless at first, so very much was he altered in appearance. The pale face, the sunken eye, the nervous and fidgety action of the young man’s hand, struck the native gentleman forcibly, and inspired his pity.

“Come with me,” said the Baboo, “to my hotel ; I want to talk to you—to ask you many things.”

Reckless offered the Baboo his arm, and walked with him to the Clarendon.

CHAPTER LIII.

LEONORA RETURNS TO ENGLAND.

"You have gained glory and a great name," the Baboo began, when they were alone in the room, "but you have not married Leonora. You now know all. Well, what do you think? Was I not right?"

"No, Baboo," said Reckless. "It was for the best that I became acquainted with the whole truth."

"Ah! Then you will not marry her?"

"I did not say that. We are engaged to be married in England. They are coming home shortly."

"Yes, I know that. They will arrive in three or four weeks' time. But I understood that your engagement was at an end."

"From whom, Baboo?"

"From the Ranee. The marriage would never be, she told me, in a letter I received from her."

"When?"

"About one month ago."

"You surprise me."

"Then you wish to marry Leonora?"

"Yes; she is the only woman whom I could ever love in this world."

"Then why did you not marry in India?"

"It was not my fault. In this country, Leonora said she would marry me in India. In India, she said she would marry me in this country."

"You are sorry?"

"For what, Baboo?"

"That you have seen her family."

"Yes."

"I thought so; and yet it was for the best, you say?"

"True, it is for the best. But, Baboo, there are times when I believe that I have been still deceived—that Leonora is not the daughter of Colonel Ormsbie and the Rance. The daughter of the Colonel she may be; but the daughter of some other woman, and not the Rance."

"The sooner you dismiss such doubt from your mind, the better."

"Did you ever see a being of mixed origin so fair and so beautiful?"

"Not many; but several—as fair, not so beautiful, perhaps. You have still that ring, I see."

"Yes; it has never been off my finger."

"I would ask you a very great favour. You have heard, no doubt, enough of me to know that I am incapable of breaking my word."

"Yes, Baboo; and if I had not heard of you, but had only spoken with you, I would have staked my existence on your integrity."

"I thank you. The favour I have to ask you is this—will you entrust me with the possession of that ring for the space of one week?"

Reckless hesitated.

"I will tell you my object. I wish to show that ring to the Sovereign of these realms, and to tell her a portion of its history."

"No," said Reckless, looking at the ring, "I will not break my faith with Leonora. No hand except hers shall ever remove it."

"Ah!" sighed the Baboo, "everything in this world connected with that cursed bauble leads to disappointment. Let me have it for only three days."

"No."

"For two days, then."

"No."

"For twenty-four hours."

"No, not for one minute."

"So long as you keep that ring, you will never marry Leonora. She will never be yours."

"Why not? Give me some reason."

"How can one reason with Fate?"

"Then it is not for the purpose you mentioned that you desire to have possession of this ring."

"It is. On my honour—if you think it possible that an Asiatic can comprehend the word—I tell you that within one week I will return it to you."

"I dare not trust you," said Reckless; "I should be faithless to my vow if I did so."

"I entreat you," said the Baboo, almost abjectly, "to gratify my inordinate vanity in this matter."

"No," replied Reckless, firmly. "Much as I respect you, I would not on any account comply with this wish of yours. Indeed, I would not remove that ring if the salvation of my own life depended on my doing so."

"Then I will not press you further. You have heard of Colonel Ornsbie's losses—pecuniary losses?"

"I have not; but in India the Colonel did tell me he had been cheated."

"He will lose about £80,000 by his various Companies, but that will not ruin him. He is, however, liable for about twenty-five lacs in all—£250,000. But, lucky man as he has always been! I am told that he will very shortly inherit estates in this country worth £15,000 a-year. That poor man whom the

Colonel removed from his wretched condition, and placed in that comfortable house in Davies-street, has outlived his cousin, and now, he—that poor man—is so ill that he is not expected to live for many days. He is attended by all the most eminent doctors in London, but they say there is no hope of his recovery. The Colonel is his heir, and will succeed to all the lands and houses.”

“I am glad to hear it,” said Reckless, without thinking of what he was saying.

“If you have Leonora for a wife, you will be rich—very rich.”

“I assure you, Baboo, that I have never given her wealth a single thought. In weighing in my mind another matter, the fortune she may receive has been nothing in the scale. Poor as I am at this present moment, I would marry her if the Colonel had been beggared by his losses, and Leonora had become portionless.”

“Poor! Are you poor?”

“Very poor, and in difficulties.”

“Will you do me the favour of allowing me to render you assistance.”

“How can I possibly accept a favour of one whom I have just refused a favour?”

“I have never kept a debtor and creditor account of obligations with my friends. Fear not that I will ask you again to lend me your ring—unless it be in Leonora’s presence. Tell me, how much do you want?”

“I am ashamed to say. But how can I accept—what claim have I——”

“Speak! It is less than a lac?”

“Much less than the sixth part of a lac. It is only

£1450—but a heavy amount to meet for one who has not 1450 shillings at present.”

“I will give you a cheque for £1500, and you will give me your promissory note, payable at your convenience.”

“How can I sufficiently thank you for this act of kindness? How can I ever repay it, even after the payment of the money?”

“By saying nothing about it,” replied the Baboo.

Reckless took the cheque, and with the proceeds settled his affairs, and then went down to the Castle, where he awaited with impatience the coming of Colonel Ornsbie and Leonora to the Downs. On the very day of his departure from town, the *Gazette* made known that he was a Major by brevet in the army, and that the Companionship of the Bath had been awarded him. Many were the congratulations he received on arriving at his home; but he did not acknowledge them so warily as might have been expected. And so far from feeling proud and elated, like Major West, Major Reckless took his honours as a mere matter of course.

Sometimes he would ride over to Sinbury, and spend the day with the Chayworths. At other times he would walk in the direction of the Downs, and look at the house; but, faithful to his promise, he did not enter the grounds, or seek to visit the establishment. There was only one part of the *Times* newspaper that Reckless ever cared to read—that which related to the arrival of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's ships at Southampton; and one morning he had the satisfaction to learn from a paragraph that “amongst the passengers by the *Ripon*, was the gallant Colonel Ornsbie, C.B., of the Bengal Horse Artillery”—and

on the same evening, Reckless received a note, the superscription of which was in the well-known handwriting of Leonora, and it was sealed with her own seal. The note was this:—

“DEAREST,—I am here! Alone. • Come!

“LEONORA.”

Reckless was not long in obeying the summons. His horse carried him to the Downs at the top of his speed. Dismounting hastily, he left his steed to go where he pleased, ran up the steps and into the hall, where he was met by Leonora, who conducted him to the room in which their vows had been plighted.

The past seemed to Reckless as a dream. He could scarcely believe that he had been in India, and had seen the four great battles that had been fought. He could not credit that he, who was but a Cornet the other day, was now a Major, and a Companion of the Bath. There was the room, just as it was when he was last there; and Leonora looking as lovely as ever, though worn with fatigue and anxiety. Gazing on her, in raptures, he was almost persuaded that the Rance, and Shereence, and the black boy were creations of his brain during sleep, or when distempered; but when Leonora led him into the drawing-room, the reality was made manifest, for there he saw a picture—an oil painting—of her mother, and of her sister, and of that boy whose countenance was so forbidding.

“Are they not admirable portraits?” said Leonora, watching the features of Reckless while he looked at them.

“Yes,” he replied, with a stifled sigh, which became a faint shudder.

“These are mine,” said Leonora. “And in the

event of my not returning to India, they will keep the features of the originals fresh in my recollection."

"Dearest," said Reckless, "I trust that our nuptials will not be long delayed. I have fulfilled every condition that you required of me, and I now demand your hand."

"It is yours, Augustus. But think you we shall be happy? Will there never arise in your heart some feelings of remorse and of sorrow that you have linked yourself to a being of a mixed race—a half-caste—one who, in the words of that lady at Simlah, has 'black blood in her veins?'"

"Never, dearest; never!"

"If you should be unhappy, remember that I shall be blameless. And should you ever reproach me, I shall point to those pictures and remind you that you saw the originals in India."

"Reproach you, Leonora? Do not torture me by any such supposition."

"It was painful for me to make that speech; but its delivery has relieved my heart of a burden."

"My own darling!"

"And now, dearest, let me ask you, if Lady Mary ought not to be informed of the truth? I would make it known to her."

"Wherefore? Her feelings would in no way interfere with my determination; and why should you run the risk of giving yourself annoyance, when there is not the slightest necessity for so doing?"

"Augustus, with one or two exceptions, which have been forgiven, you have hitherto complied with all my wishes. From this hour I will comply with your feelings, assured that they will seldom be unreasonable."

"Dearest Leonora!" said Reckless, pressing her to his heart, "my most fervent wish is that we may be united as speedily as convenient to yourself. A month hence, Major West is to be married to my eldest sister. Shall our nuptials be celebrated on the same day?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

CHAPTER LIV.

BUSINESS MATTERS.

COLONEL ORNSBIE arrived at his house in Davies-street just in time to witness the death of his cousin, Sir Edmund Rankleigh, who was first known to the reader as Mr. Brown. As heir-at-law, the Colonel laid claim to the estates, to which the late Sir Edmund had an undisputed right; and after a faint opposition on the part of another branch of the family, the claim was recognised, and the Colonel put in possession. Valuable as were the estates, the amount for which they were disposed of at the hammer barely covered the amount of the losses the Colonel had sustained in his various speculations, owing to the rascality of those whom he had so implicitly trusted. Had it not been for this wonderful piece of good fortune, the great bulk of the Colonel's property would have been sacrificed to meet his liabilities; for the majority of those who had "joined" him in his speculations, and had taken shares, were persons who had no property whatsoever.

At Reckless Castle, when the Colonel called to renew his acquaintance with Lady Mary and Sir Charles Reckless, he was received with extreme cordiality, on

his own account—as an officer who had so signally distinguished himself, and of whose bearing and gallantry in the field both Majors Reckless and West had so frequently spoken.

“Was it you,” one of the boys asked him, “that galloped with the guns up to the batteries?”

“Yes, my boy,” said the Colonel.

“And you had to hold your jaw up with your hand, when the bullet hit you?” asked another of the boys.

“Yes,” said the Colonel; “I had to hold my jaw, in every sense of the phrase, when that happened.”

“And did you talk to Guss?” inquired one of the little girls, “when the big guns were firing?”

“Yes, dear; and Guss talked to me,” replied the Colonel.

“And have you got a red ribbon, like that which sister Mary sewed upon Major West’s red jacket?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Guss wouldn’t let her sew *his* on. He said, ‘No; I’ll get somebody else to do that.’ Wasn’t that very rude of Guss?”

“Very, dear.” (And the Colonel laughed, in concert with Lady Mary and Sir Charles.)

A bell rang, and summoned the little folks to dinner; and the Colonel, Lady Mary, and Sir Charles only remained in the drawing-room.

“With reference to sewing on that red ribbon,” said the Colonel, “I have, I believe, to congratulate you, Lady Mary and Sir Charles, on the approaching nuptials of your daughter with Major West. A more gallant, humane, and sensible officer never lived; and handsomely as he has been rewarded by the Horse Guards, he has deserved all that has been granted to him.”

"He was a great favourite here," said Lady Mary, "before he went to India and distinguished himself."

"Of one more dear to me, and to yourselves—I speak of your son Augustus—I do not think so highly as an officer. Of his bravery, there never was any question; what was written of Murat was strictly applicable to him :

"While the broken line, enlarging,
Fell, or fled along the plain,
There, be sure, was Reckless charging—
Charging with all might and main.
On his war-horse, through the ranks,
Like a stream which bursts its banks—
He onward, onward bore the brave,
Like foam upon the highest wave!"

But his discretion was sadly at fault. He gave orders upon his own responsibility."

"Not that order, I hope," said Sir Charles, "which induced a Brigadier to take some of the artillery and cavalry into Ferozepore, from the field of Ferozeshah?"

"Oh, dear--no," said the Colonel; "it was the other way. His great cry was, 'Come along; here are the batteries; we are to charge 'em!' But let me not dwell on his errors, the dear boy. The success which attended most of his orders was so great—though the loss was always heavy in killed and wounded—that no one could find fault with him when it was all over."

"Poor Augustus!" said Lady Mary; "he was always so very impetuous."

There was a pause for a few seconds in the conversation. It was broken by the Colonel, who said—

"Major Reckless informed me this morning that it is his intention to be married to my daughter on the 18th of next month. You are aware that this engagement was entered into previous to his leaving England.

"I have no sort of objection to this arrangement of the young people, and, for their sakes, I hope that none exists in the Major's own family."

"None whatever," said Sir Charles.

"None whatever," said Lady Mary.

"Then, with your permission," said the Colonel, "I will at once inform you that my daughter's portion will be the Downs, and a house in London—in Davies-street."

"And a very handsome portion," said Sir Charles. "My son's portion, Colonel Ornsbie—the only portion my younger sons can expect—is that which he has received—his commission—his profession."

"And quite sufficient," said the Colonel. "It was the only portion that I had, before fortuitous circumstances made it greater."

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CHAPTER LV.

HE DOES MARRY HER.

A MONTH elapsed. The day for the union of the two couples had arrived. It was arranged that the ceremony should be performed in the old church, not more than a mile distant from Reckless Castle, and on the estate. The old church was a *very* old church, and a rather small church. Its antiquity was apparent from the number of marble monuments and tombs therein, erected in the time of the Crusaders. And here and

there were small panes of very old stained-glass, in such of the original windows as had escaped demolition. In the vaults beneath lay the remains of several of the oldest and most influential families in England; and in one of those vaults there reposed the ashes of all the members of the Reckless family who had died in England. The vicar of the old church not only "consented" to the Reverend Mr. Chayworth performing the ceremony, but very graciously offered to assist him therein.

It was a beautiful day in the first week of October—"a most propitious day;" the sun shone brightly and warmly, and there was not a cloud in the heavens. A very large concourse of friends and relations were assembled, and amongst the former were the greater number of those gentlemen with whom Reckless and West had been so intimate at Cambridge. A breakfast for ninety persons was laid in the large dining-room. The brothers of Miss Reckless were, of course, present—the doctor, the lawyer, and the divine; and all the younger branches were permitted to attend at the church.

As is usual on these occasions, the bridegrooms had to sustain a little pleasantry from their old companions while they were making their toilettes, or, as Reckless expressed it, "getting themselves up." West blushed under the good-natured raillery of Dacre and the rest, and confessed that he felt far more nervous than he did when finding himself for the first time under a heavy fire at Moodkee. Reckless, on the other hand, affected to treat the matter as one of course—just as though he had been used to matrimony. Reckless wore an undress military coat,—a blue surtout, frogged,—the coat he used to wear when on Sir Edward's staff in Calcutta.

and a cornet of a Dragoon regiment. West was attired in an undress uniform jacket of the regiment to which he had lately belonged. Both, of course, wore their decoration of the Order of the Bath. Pale as Augustus looked, Lady Mary thought her son never looked so handsome as he did on that morning. His appearance was that of what he was—a dashing, daring Dragoon. There could be no question about his being a soldier. Sir Charles could not conceal his pride when he contemplated his martial son, and fixed his eye upon the badge which was the reward of “conspicuous gallantry on several fields of battle.”

Sir Charles and Lady Mary were also proud of their daughter, and justly so. She looked not only pre-eminently beautiful, but dignified, queen-like, and happy withal. The bridesmaids—five in number—were the daughters of as many gentlemen in the county. They were all handsome girls, but not one of them could be compared, in point of beauty and stateliness, with the bride whom they surrounded.

At eleven o'clock the procession was formed. Reckless and West, attended by their friends, led the way; then came Sir Charles and Lady Mary, with a carriage full of little ones; then the bride, her bridesmaids, Mrs. Chayworth, and her sister; then the three professional gentlemen, the brothers of Miss Reckless. The rest of the company followed at discretion. All the gardens in the neighbourhood, for miles round, had been stripped of their flowers by the peasantry, who strewed them on the road, on either side of which were groups of children—the children of the poor.

The *cortège* had scarcely arrived at the church, when the carriage of Colonel Ornsbie was seen in the distance, advancing at a brisk pace. Leonora had only one

bridesmaid—the second sister (as she was called) of Augustus.

Leonora's beauty has been so frequently described, that it is almost needless to make any further allusion thereto. But upon this her bridal morning, there was a pensive expression and smile on her features which imparted to her beauty an indescribable interest. Those who had previously seen her, re-admired to the full; those who had not, basted their eyes upon her face, form, and bearing. Beautiful as was Miss Reckless, Leonora eclipsed her. Her dark hair and large dark eyes, in contrast with that alabaster and transparent complexion, riveted the attention of all present. The head, too, was perfectly Grecian, and the features so finely moulded and "chiselled." Reckless gave her his hand, then his arm, and led her to the altar, followed by the Colonel, who was attired in the gorgeous full-dress uniform of the Bengal Horse Artillery. West, leading Miss Reckless, followed; and presently the whole throng—adults and children—were standing before the communion-table. It was a very imposing spectacle—such an one as would be never forgotten by those who witnessed it. The wounds of the Colonel and the two young heroes were scarcely healed. Not a year ago they were amidst the din of war, in a distant land. The praises which had been bestowed upon the gallant deeds in which they had taken a prominent part, were still fresh in the minds of their countrymen. That was the "Colonel Ombic," that the "Captain West," and that the "Captain Reckless," whose names had become so familiar in the mouths of men, women, and children.

The ceremony over, the formalities required—that of signing names in the vestry—having been gone

through, the entire party repaired to the Castle, and sat down to breakfast.

Leonora had the place of honour on the right hand of Sir Charles, and upon the other side of her sat her husband's eldest brother—Mr. Reckless. Colonel Ornsbie had taken charge of the other bride, Mrs. West, at the other end of the table, and on her left sat John Chayworth, who somewhat, but unintentionally, offended her—though he did not show it—by speaking once or twice of her husband ("the Major") and his own brother-in-law as "little Edgar." Lady Mary was under the care of the General, Edgar's patron and friend, and listened with very great interest to the many excellent traits which he spoke of in the character of her son-in-law. Dacre had attached himself to the young lady who was now "Miss Reckless, vice Mrs. West, promoted." Captain Bygram, of the Coldstream Guards, who was always labouring under some erroneous impression, fancied that Mrs. Chayworth was unmarried, and a bridesmaid,—fell desperately in love with her, and signified as much in one of his *sotto voce* speeches. His astonishment when she responded to a question addressed by Sir Charles to "Mrs. Chayworth," may be readily conceived.

The repast—and it was a very merry one—ended, the ladies, on a signal from Lady Mary, rose from the table, and retired to the drawing-room.

When the gentlemen, now left to themselves, had resumed their seats, Sir Charles stood up and spoke as follows:—

"Gentlemen, I have to propose, in accordance with a time-honoured custom, that you will fill your glasses, and join with me in drinking a health. I am twice blest on this auspicious day. My son has become the

husband of the peerless beauty and amiable woman who has just left my side ; and my daughter has become the wife of a young but distinguished soldier, of whose merits it is unnecessary for me to speak, since his gallant deeds have become a matter of history. My pride upon this occasion is enhanced, when I come to reflect that my son's wife is the daughter of an officer whose services to the State, during the recent war, were so conspicuous and so generally acknowledged as those of Colonel Ornsbie, of the Bengal Horse Artillery. I have to request that you will drink the health of my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Reckless, and of my son-in-law, Major West."

This toast having been heartily responded to, Colonel Ornsbie rose and said :—

"Sir Charles Reckless, and Gentlemen, on behalf of my daughter, I believe I have—and, indeed, I claim—the right of returning thanks—the more especially as my name has been so flatteringly mentioned by the father of my daughter's husband. To be the father-in-law of Major Reckless is, indeed, a source of pride to me ; but—if I may use an expression of Sir Charles—how greatly is that pride enhanced when I reflect that my son-in-law is the brother of the beautiful bride who, but a few moments ago, sat on my right hand. To borrow another idea of Sir Charles, I desire to say that the gallant deeds of my son-in-law have become so generally known, that it would be tedious for me to dilate upon them ; and I shall therefore satisfy myself by proposing the health and happiness of Mrs. West and of Major Reckless."

This toast, also, having been heartily responded to, Major West rose ; and, simultaneously, Major Reckless. They looked at each other across the table, like

two members on the floor of the House of Commons, neither being disposed to give way. The position—or rather, if we may use a theatrical phrase, the “situation”—created some amusement, and no small amount of laughter; for little West, drawing himself up to his full height, had folded his arms, while Reckless stooped forward, and thrust his hands into his breeches-pockets. Reckless eventually conceded “the right to speak first” to West, and waited to return thanks on his own behalf. Other concise speeches, of a miscellaneous character, were then made; but it is not worth while to report them, as spoken. The Rev. John Chayworth made an admirable and humorous speech, which was received with much laughter; and Mr. Reckless, the barrister, delivered himself of a very appropriate and artistic oration.

It had been arranged that at three o'clock the carriages which were to bear away in different directions the two couples, should be brought to the door. Major and Mrs. Reckless were destined for a tour in Wales; Major and Mrs. West were going to Dover, preparatory to embarking for the Continent.

It was not far from the appointed hour, and Reckless was impatiently looking at his watch, and expecting every moment to hear the carriages announced, when, lo! there was heard in the dining-room a piercing shriek, which resounded in every corner of the Castle. The members of the family and the guests stood aghast for a moment, when there came another and another shriek—each in a different voice. The whole of the establishment seemed terror-stricken. Reckless was the first to escape from the dining-room to inquire the cause. “What is the matter?” he inquired of the

adies whom he met. None of them could answer him; they were breathless—pale as death. By this time, the whole of those who so recently were laughing over the festive board, were now anxiously attempting to arrive at the reason of this sudden alarm. Sir Charles sought Lady Mary; Reckless, his wife; West, his wife; and Chayworth, his wife,—for none of these ladies were to be seen.

"Is the house on fire?" Mr. Reckless asked, impatiently, of one of the maids, who was wringing her hands. "Speak, woman! Speak!"

The woman shook her head, and uttered, "No—she is dead!"

"Who? Who is dead? Not my mother!" And he rushed up the stairs in an agony of mind far beyond description.

"Tell me—*who* is dead?" said Colonel Ornsbie, quietly and gently, to the maid, and holding her hand while he spoke.

"The lady, sir," said she.

"What lady?"

"Oh God! oh God! oh God!" was the only reply that the bewildered woman could or would give.

By this time all the gentlemen present had ascended the staircase, and were in the passages on the first floor, endeavouring to ascertain what accident had happened, and whether they could render any assistance. From one of the rooms were heard voices and lamentations: but, as yet, all was a mystery to those assembled in the passages. Ere long, Sir Charles came out, and in a state of great agitation, his features contorted with the anguish he experienced. Taking Colonel Ornsbie by the hand, he led him into a small room, and closed the door.

"My daughter is dead!" said the Colonel, calmly, but sorrowfully.

"Scarcely yet," sighed Sir Charles; "but there is little or no hope of her recovery. Will you see her?"

"Yes."

"Then follow me."

Sir Charles gently opened the door of the apartment, in which the voices and lamentations were no longer heard. All was still, and not a word spoken therein. On an iron bedstead lay the beautiful Leonora, her long black hair falling in tresses over her snowy-white shoulders, and from her arm was running a feeble stream of blood; for Doctor Reckless, under the impression that she had been stricken down by apoplexy, lost no time in opening a vein. On one side of the bed knelt her husband, with his face buried in his hands; on the other side stood the physician, holding Leonora's hand in his, and feeling for the pulse, though pulsation had now ceased, as well as the action of the heart.

Without a groan, or sigh, or glance, to show
 A parting pang, the spirit from her pass'd;
 And those who watched her nearest could not know
 The very instant, till the change that cast
 Her sweet face into shadow—dull and slow—
 Glazed o'er her eyes—the beautiful, the black!
 Oh! to possess such lustre, and then lack!

The Colonel stood at the foot of the bed, and gazed for several minutes on the lifeless body of his child. Great as was his grief, however, he did not shed tears. Noiselessly he moved to near where the doctor stood, and having by a sign received permission to do so, he bent down and kissed affectionately the white forehead, which was still warm. Sir Charles's grief was mani-

rested in another way. He wept—as did all his sons. Lady Mary and the other ladies—Mrs. Chayworth and Mrs. West—knelt down beside a couch, and prayed for the repose of Leonora's soul.

As soon as the guests became acquainted with the fact of what had happened, at the suggestion of the old General, they lost no time in leaving the Castle, that the family might indulge their sorrow unseen by strangers. In so brief a space, the house of rejoicing had become a house of mourning.

The particulars of Leonora's death were these:—She had retired with Lady Mary and her sisters-in-law—Mrs. West and Mrs. Chayworth—to prepare for her departure. While attiring herself in her travelling-dress, she suddenly complained of feeling ill. "I have a pain here," she sighed, placing her hand over her heart. And then she added, "Ah, me! It would be for the best, perhaps, if I were to die to-day. For dear Augustus's sake—Ah, me!" she exclaimed, suddenly and vehemently, "This—this—yes—this. Augustus! Augustus! This is death!" Those were the last words she uttered, sinking into an easy-chair, which was near the bed on which she died.

The spirit had not taken its flight more than half an hour, when the body of Leonora became dark, and then darker and darker; and by the time that the limbs were rigid, and the flesh cold, it was as black as the blackest night! It was not the change of colour that accompanies rapid decomposition and decay. It was so different, that Doctor Reckless was led to believe that Leonora had been poisoned by some potent drug, and suggested that a surgeon might be sent for to assist him in making a *post-mortem* examination. He had never seen, he said, a case so extraordinary, nor

had he heard of one. The appearance of the deceased bewildered him. At first her husband objected to his brother's proposal; but after Colonel Ornsbie had taken him aside, and spoken to him privately, he consented, but very reluctantly. The examination was accordingly made, and the cause of death discovered. Leonora had died of a disease of the heart. The surgeon—a gentleman of great eminence and experience—who “assisted,” or rather, who performed the operation, was as much perplexed to account for the sudden change of colour as was Dr. Reckless himself; for although life had now been extinct for sixteen hours there was not yet a sign of decomposition, nor did it show itself until after the third day.

Leonora had a place in the vault beneath the old church in which she had been married not a week previously. The funeral was conducted with extreme privacy, and none but the members of the family were present.

Reckless having expressed a strong desire to be left as much as possible to himself, took up his abode at the Downs. The Colonel occupied one side of the house and Reckless the other. Colonel Ornsbie, however, did not remain very long in the country. At the expiration of ten days—when Reckless's grief had calmed itself down—he left the Downs for London; and having received letters from India, urgently requesting him to return as soon as possible, he took a passage by the first steamer, leaving Reckless in the entire possession of the extensive estate. And here the young Major roamed about alone, at all hours, by day and night, holding imaginary conversations with dear Leonora and with the Rancee and Shereenee, before whose portraits he very frequently stood. At Shereenee's he wo-

gaze for hours, for it reminded him of Leonora when the spirit had departed from her—when he last saw her, in her lace shroud, lying in her leaden coffin. And, strange as it may seem, this last recollection of her was the dearest, as well as the most painful. One day, when he was gazing on these portraits, his mother paid him a visit. She had seen the paintings before, but had not heeded them particularly. She had looked at them out of mere passing curiosity, and, in reply to a question, had been truthfully told by Leonora that the elderly lady was an Eastern Princess, and the younger one her daughter. But now that Lady Mary followed the eyes of her disconsolate son, she became amazed. In Shereence's portrait she detected a wonderful likeness to the corpse of her son's late wife.

"My child," said Lady Mary, tenderly, and arousing Augustus from his reverie, "there is a mystery attached to the story of your love, which I fancy I can now solve."

"Mother!" said Augustus, "the solution is here—before you. Who is that?" (he pointed to the portrait of Shereence.)

"Leonora's sister."

And that?" (he pointed to the likeness of the Ranee.)

"Her mother."

"Listen!" said Reckless. And he recounted to her the story of the Ranee's love, and all that had happened to him in India, in respect to his engagement with Leonora—not omitting what Leonora had told him, that their offspring might be black, or so dark as to leave no doubt as to their Asiatic origin. The tale included, he put to her the question—"Did not Leonora's conditions do honour to the darling's integrity?"

exchanged into a regiment of cavalry serving in India. This great alteration in his demeanour was rather pleasing to his relations; but still, there was something so wild and restless in the expression of his eye, and something so unsettled or unquiet in his manner, that it occasioned them much anxiety.

His brother-in-law, Major West, would not believe that there would be any more serious fighting with the Seiks, and accepted Reckless's offer to "go and live at the Downs" during his absence. It did not take Reckless long to "pack up." He was "off" within ten days of the receipt of the Colonel's last letter. On the passage to India he was very reserved and distant, even with those whom he had known previously; but it was otherwise when he joined the head-quarters of the army, then at Ferozepore, and ready to cross the Sutlej. The Commander-in-Chief welcomed him very warmly, and *requested* that Reckless would come upon his staff—a request that Reckless respectfully complied with, albeit it was opposed to his own inclination; for Reckless's present desire was to serve with the 14th Dragoons, then under the command of the renowned William Havelock, to which distinguished officer Reckless was introduced by an equally distinguished officer—the late Brigadier-General Cureton—in his tent.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Major Reckless," said Colonel Havelock, on this occasion of the introduction, his bright blue eye dancing with enterprize—"I have heard so much of you from our mutual friends."

"Yes, this is Reckless," said Brigadier Cureton, looking as like the portraits of General Blücher as man could possibly look; "this is the boy who, like you, Havelock, bears a charmed life. My belief is, that the

lead has not yet been dug out of the mines that will make the bullet to kill Reckless."

"What about that order, Major Reckless, at Moody-kee?" said Colonel Havelock, smiling very comically. "They say all sorts of things."

"I know they do, Colonel," said Reckless. "What will not malice or misrepresentation be guilty of? The Chief *may* have said 'Threaten;' but I am quite convinced he said 'Charge.'"

"Or meant it?" suggested the Colonel, "which amounts to the same thing." And here he broke into a loud laugh, in which the Brigadier heartily joined.

"Success is the great criterion of merit," said Reckless, quietly; "and it is very hard that that order should always be made a standing joke against me."

"Very hard, indeed," said the little Colonel, smiling. "But some people, you know, will be ungrateful."

"But the Chief himself says nothing about it," said Reckless; "it is only the military critics—those fellows who, if asked to elect a staff-officer, would cry, 'J.R. Drumley for ever! He takes us out of danger, instead of into it.'"

Colonel Cureton again laughed, and said, "Be careful, Will, I entreat you, how you take orders from this fellow, Reckless."

"Never fear," said the Colonel, laughing, and admiring the bearing of Major Reckless, who remarked, "I am satisfied Colonel Havelock would anticipate such orders as I am charged with giving on my own responsibility."

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Not many days after the conversation above detailed, at Ramnugger, Major Reckless was seen galloping from the side of the Commander-in-Chief towards the

spot where Her Majesty's 14th Dragoons were drawn up. The enemy had opened fire from a few guns, which were made an advanced post, but behind a wide and deep ditch.

Ere long, a squadron of the 14th, with the Colonel of the regiment at its head, became detached. At this moment, Brigadier Cureton, who, telescope in hand, had been anxiously watching Reckless galloping down, exclaimed, throwing the glass upon the ground, "They are mad! They are mad! They are going to charge those guns!" And, putting spurs to his charger, he galloped as fast as his fleet Arab could carry him towards the spot. But he was too late.

"Forward!—Forward! Follow, 14th Dragoons!" had been called aloud several times by Havlock, and echoed by Reckless, who rode by his side; and the squadron was charging with an impetuosity which would have swept before it any ordinary obstacle. The old Brigadier did not overtake them until they were at the very mouth of the trap which had been laid for them; and he charged *with* them in that mad charge, in which riders and horses fell over each other, in inextricable confusion and dismay, filling, as it were, the deep ditch with a huge mass of brave men, baffled in a futile attempt! The Seiks came out, and, under the very muzzles of their guns, cut their victims to pieces, and left them as they lay!

Thus perished Major Augustus Reckless, in the company of men who were as brave and as daring as himself. It was a sad mistake, that which deprived the State of their future services; but it was a death which, no doubt, all of those three men desired to die—the death of a soldier in the field of battle.

Their loss was sadly mourned in the camp, especially

that of Reckless, whom everybody in India loved for that generous disposition for which he was so famed, as well as for that fearlessness which was so prominent a feature in his character. And in England he was mourned by all who knew him, as well as by his relations. Colonel Ornsbie, who was with the army, in command of a Brigade of Artillery, had great difficulty, a fortnight afterwards, in finding his remains; and only identified them eventually by the ring upon the little finger of his left hand—the ring which Leonora had given to him as a love-token—so frightfully mutilate and decomposed were the bodies of all the brave men who perished in that ditch.

Reckless's ashes repose near those of the gallant Cureton and William Havelock, and within a short distance of where he fell. Every cold weather, and on the anniversary of his death, two ladies, clothed in white, and veiled, visit that lonely spot. They are escorted by a number of horsemen, who remain at some distance until the pious ceremony which they perform is concluded. Those ladies, as the reader will imagine, are the Ranee, and her daughter Shereenee.

